Anthony Aguilar: Point of No Return? U.S. Military Assets in Position for All-Out War with Iran

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. We are joined again by Anthony Aguilar, a retired U.S. lieutenant colonel with 24 years of experience as a combat infantry officer in the U.S. Special Forces. And yes, Colonel Aguilar is also well known as an important whistleblower on Israeli war crimes. So thank you for coming back.

#Anthony Aguilar

Thank you, Glenn. It's always a pleasure to see you, and thanks for having me on.

#Glenn

Yeah, these are worrying times, to be honest. We see that tensions in the Middle East seem to be rapidly increasing again over the past few days. It's unclear if this is preparation for an all-out war, but the U.S. seems to have now accumulated more capabilities. We see this third aircraft carrier, the Roosevelt, which has entered the Middle East. And there have also been strikes against the Iranian coast in the Strait of Hormuz. And the Iranians appear to be hitting radars and air defense systems. I was wondering, how do you read the situation, especially in terms of the military buildup?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, there are some concerning factors that we are seeing globally and then, of course, regionally and domestically for those here in the United States, with regard to the actions and words of President Trump. So, to start with the first point you mentioned, the USS Theodore Roosevelt. You can kind of see this updated layout here because there have been some changes. The USS Theodore Roosevelt, Navy CVN-71 aircraft carrier, which is part of Carrier Strike Group Nine, has now entered the Central Command area of responsibility. That also went in with the USS Makin Island, which is a Wasp-class amphibious assault carrier.

It's smaller, but it's still a flattop carrier that has F-35s and Ospreys. It carries about 2,500 assault Marines in addition to the crew, so about 4,000 folks. And that made it into the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman. So what we have there right now in the Central Command AOR—we still have the USS Boxer. That's another light amphibious Wasp-class flattop with F-35s, Ospreys, and another Marine Expeditionary Unit, or a portion of it. The USS George Bush is still there. That's Navy CVN-77. And the reason I say these Ns is because those are Nimitz-class. The N on the end of those means Nimitz-class. So we have the USS Theodore Roosevelt, CVN-71, Nimitz-class.

USS George W. Bush, CVN-77, Nimitz-class. We've got the USS Boxer, LHD-4, amphibious assault craft. And then we have the USS Makin Island, LHD-8. So those are all there. The USS George Washington and some of its escorts and destroyers left, but they didn't go home. You recall that George Washington was only there for about three months. The George Bush has been extended from six months, which they were already at, to a year. So they're not leaving. The George Washington didn't come home. You know, it basically took the route back that the Theodore Roosevelt took in, you know, back through the Strait of Malacca, back into the South China Sea. It'll take seven to ten days to get back there.

And it will link up with the USS Tripoli, LHA-7, which was in the Central Command AOR. That's now in the SOUTHCOM AOR because we have used so many of our aircraft carriers. Remember the Lincoln, the Ford. We've rotated through so many aircraft carriers outside of their geographic rotation under their assigned combatant command—Southern Command, Pacific Command, Northern Command, Central Command, European Command, Africa Command, AFRICOM—that now this ship, the Washington, is going back to its assigned AOR. That is not a Fifth Fleet carrier. That is a Seventh Fleet carrier, U.S. PACOM. So that's going back to fall in on that. And we can't ignore the timing of this.

The day that Trump is having his trilateral meeting and then bilateral meetings with Xi and Putin, respectively, we have this change in aircraft carrier deployment. It is a replacement in theater, but not a switch-out. They're going back to cover down in SOUTHCOM. So, looking at this layout, this is a message. This is a message from the U.S. Navy, via the president of the United States as the

arbiter of foreign policy and the mouthpiece of U.S. power, that we can cover down on China. We haven't turned our back on Taiwan. We're giving them missiles. We're giving them launchers. We're putting an aircraft carrier right there.

And, oh, by the way, China has kept their aircraft carrier there. This is China's aircraft carrier in the South China Sea. That's the Liaoning, CV-16, which is a modern aircraft carrier. These are the aircraft carriers that the United States says can never match ours. Well, the USS Washington is a Nimitz-class carrier. It's old. The Nimitz-class carriers were designed and broke ground in the '80s. They're old. China's is not old, so it has longer duration. If we're talking about a matchup, it's not as capable in terms of all the things that the U.S. aircraft carrier has, but it's certainly a peer match in terms of the J-35 fifth-generation aircraft, the YG-800, and the various missiles that they have.

It's a formidable military presence. So now we're in a position where the United States is still very much massing naval power, missile power—what's left of it—and personnel in Central Command against Iran, but also flexing some capability in the South China Sea and U.S. Pacific Command. So in doing that, with aircraft carriers that have been moved out because they have to be repaired or they've been deployed for so long, like the USS Lincoln and the USS Ford, we're now matching all of this in Central Command and the South China Sea.

So we've really let up on what we're covering in European Command, Russia, what we're covering in SOUTHCOM, the Global South, and, you know, other areas like the Mediterranean. We did send two destroyers from the George Bush carrier group to the Red Sea. They're in the Red Sea, conducting a presence there, which Ansar Allah now has complete control of because they pushed the Saudi-Yemeni-backed forces out of there. So we're covering that too. We're now covering AFRICOM in the Red Sea, CENTCOM to the Gulf of Oman, to the Arabian Sea, and now the carrier strike group that's there.

And remember, the United States Fifth Fleet, the headquarters of Navy Central—that is, the Navy component of CENTCOM—is no longer in Bahrain. They have all left. The Secretary of the Navy has said it himself. It was blown to hell. And now that entire headquarters is in Diego Garcia. So now we have a problem in terms of how America fights wars. You've got movement and maneuver from a Navy perspective. That's your aircraft carriers. That's your aircraft.

That's your destroyers. That's your cruisers' protection. That's all of your interceptors, your Aegis interceptors, your land interceptors. We're critically short on those. And now we're splitting the baby three ways. Intelligence. Because Iran has hit a lot of those radars in Kuwait and Bahrain, Iran is taking a clear shot at trying to blind U.S. capability to gather advance intelligence on some of these capabilities that Iran may be preparing to use for a more devastating impact. And Iran did that. You know, Iran hit Bahrain again because we have a radar facility there, and Ali al-Salem in Kuwait again, with drones, not their more capable missiles. So they're not really wasting anything. And then you consider fires.

That's your long-range precision fires. That's your artillery fires, like your PrSM, your ATACMS, your Tomahawks, et cetera. And we're running critically low on those. As Donald Trump said during his comments in China, "It's a great missile. Nobody else makes it. We have it. We only give it to our friends. We give it to very few friends." And in doing so, we still are critically short on them. Well, it can be the Ferrari of missiles. If it doesn't have tires, your Ferrari doesn't matter. And then you consider sustainment and protection, all of which we are critically low on, splitting the baby now three ways between the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman—the CENTCOM AOR, Iran—and the South China Sea.

It's dangerously spread thin. So that move that we saw with naval forces in the CENTCOM AOR was not a replacement swap-out: "Let's get everything else ready so we can cover." You're basically robbing Peter to pay Paul when it comes to manning, when it comes to rotations. So it's not a good situation. And this is not just coming from me. This is coming from the acting secretary of the Navy, who has now been confirmed as the secretary of the Navy. He said all of this in his testimony, if people tuned into it. So this is not Tony's assessment. I'm just conveying what the secretary of the Navy has said.

#Glenn

The situation doesn't seem great, but given this situation with capabilities, how do you explain the actions being taken now? As I pointed out before, the U.S. has already hit a few coastal towns or bases near the Strait of Hormuz, along the coastline. But I guess, you know, if I were Iran and saw all these military capabilities building up, I would want to preempt that a bit. So is this the purpose of going after the radars? Because if you can get rid of the radars, I'm thinking the U.S. just sits there overstretched, with a lot of capabilities out at sea that it can't use in the same effective way. I'm just trying to make sense of what both sides are hitting here.

#Anthony Aguilar

The United States' most recent strikes are a continuation of a strike pattern we've seen, which begins to indicate that the modified and updated U.S. CENTCOM Joint Prioritized Targeting List, or the JPTL, is now focusing on specific areas in preparation for an operation. We're not seeing strikes throughout Iran. We're seeing very specific strikes. And that's preparation of the environment. That's preparation of the operational environment for follow-on operations. And where we're seeing that specifically, if you look at this—here's kind of a 3D image. Here's the UAE. Here's Oman. Here's the UAE. Here's the Strait of Hormuz. U.S. naval power is down over here. We're not in the Strait. We're not in the Persian Gulf.

And again, the U.S. has continued to hit Qeshm Island, Bandar Abbas right on the coast, Sirik, Larak Island, and Hormuz Island. That's what the United States is continuing to hit. So it's clear that the United States is going after their launchers—the launchers that we can reach with the remaining medium-range precision missiles we have aboard aircraft, which can deploy them from a standoff

distance of hundreds of kilometers away, not from overhead. And, you know, we have not achieved air superiority, air supremacy, or even, I would say, maybe the beginning stages of air dominance. But really, if you were to classify it, we're at a position of air parity with Iran, where the airspace is still contested.

So when there's this narrative that the United States and Israel are just flying all over Iran and covering everything without challenge, that's not true. A lot of the strikes that we're doing along the coast or even farther into the interior are done from a standoff distance, because we have jets like the F-22, the F-35, the F-16, the F-15, and the F-35I that Israel has, which can fire long-range precision munitions from a standoff distance. So we haven't even achieved that air superiority or air dominance capability. The United States is striking within a specific range of its launch capabilities, which means the United States is moving in incrementally, not to strike everything yet, but to create space to then move naval assets forward.

Because if you move naval assets forward—your destroyers, your guided-missile cruisers, your smaller LHAs and LHDs—you can then strike with F-35Bs. You can then bring your big carriers a little closer and launch armadas of aircraft. So that's what the United States is preparing with Israel. That's part of the plan. So what is Iran going after? Iran is going after the ability of the U.S. and Israel to see and to guide aircraft from the ground, meaning the United States will then have to deploy and rely on air-based communications, like AWACS or the LHC-34, those types of command-and-control aircraft, which then create other vulnerabilities.

You shoot one of those out of the sky. They don't move very fast. They have to fly lower. They're not stealth. They can't be stealth because of all that they emit. Things have to see them. If you go stealth on those, then the things you're trying to communicate with can't communicate. So they're very exposed. So Iran is going to knock out the eyes on the ground. Naval Support Activity Bahrain, where Fifth Fleet was—there is still a radar capability there, which Iran obviously attempted to hit over the last two or three nights. And then, obviously, in Kuwait, Ali Al Salem, where we do have radar capability, protection capability, or surveillance capability.

So if Iran can knock out our ability to see from the ground at close range, you know, within the Persian Gulf—you know, because here's Kuwait, here's Bahrain—hitting those targets at close range then forces the United States and Israel to have a greater offset, which then allows Iran to see things further out. You may not be able to stop it further out, but you can see it further out, and you can prepare for what your defense plan is going to be. But let's not forget that Iran does have that capability to hit further out. You know, here's the range of all of their drones.

Here's that 2,000-kilometer mark that Ayatollah Mojtaba recently said we're not abiding by anymore: "We're going all the way out to 4,000 and 5,000." Well, they have everything from the Shahed 101, which can range 500 kilometers—which is very likely what they used in Bahrain and Kuwait—all the way up to the Shahed 149, which can reach 4,000 kilometers. Why waste the good stuff? You know, why break out the good champagne when you don't need to yet? And then the Shahed 121, the

123, the 125, and the 178, which can reach 4,500 and beyond, up to 5,200 kilometers. That puts anything and everything within reach, including all of the United Kingdom.

Including all of our bases in Europe, including all of our bases here. And that's the drone capability. So if you break that out a bit and look at the missile capability, here's Iran. That large ring, that missile capability, also includes Diego Garcia, where we've put Fifth Fleet headquarters and the special operations headquarters that's operating there. So when you look at this, there's a clear strategy that the United States is trying to counter, that Iran is trying to counter-counter, and they're both doing these things that, to me, are absolutely the road to war. This is something you could look at in a military history book and read the chapter on the U.S.-Iran war. That will go on for many chapters, because I do think this war will go on for quite some time.

We're already approaching nine months. Remember back in February, when it was, "We'll be in and out in a few days. The U.S. will be in and out in a couple of weeks"? We're now going on nine months. You know, people have conceived and had children in the time that this war has been going on. And it was supposed to be quick. So if you look at this in terms of the road to war—the politics, economics, the warfare—we're leading up to that road to war. And I don't think that Trump's discussions with Xi and Putin yielded anything in terms of stopping Trump, based on what we can tell so far. And, you know, to add the cherry on top of everything that we've already been seeing, U. S. bases are set on a 90-day plan for this.

The president is putting Avenger missile systems at Mar-a-Lago. Senior U.S. officials are moving into on-base housing to protect themselves and their families. The president is reinforcing his escape with Squadron One of the U.S. Air Force, which is the helicopter unit that's responsible for evacuating the president. They rehearsed that route last week, flying to the White House, evacuating the staff, and then flying to one of the continuity-of-government facilities. And then, of course, the systems going down at the FAA, Microsoft, the banks, and the NSA. I mean, that's a big hit. If that's not a telltale sign that something's going on, then some people just aren't going to wake up. But last night...

Here in the United States, as we all slept in our beds at around one in the morning, we launched a Minuteman III nuclear weapon without the warhead. We fired the Minuteman III from California all the way out to the Solomon Island chain. So do we do that? A few times a year, sometimes. But it's not only the fact that we did it. It's the fact that we are specifically testing the Glory Trip 257, or the GT 257, intercontinental ballistic missile that's part of the Minuteman III family. The Minuteman III is the land-based component of the U.S. nuclear triad: land, sea, and air. That includes our nuclear-armed submarines, like the USS Alaska, our B-2 bomber fleet, and our Minuteman fleet in the United States.

That's the nuclear triad. So the Minuteman III is a critical part of that. And here we are amidst all of this tension: meetings in China with Russia and China, the saber-rattling over what may be happening in the Middle East with Iran. All these things are going on. We decided now is the perfect

time to test our newest nuclear-capable Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile. Again, without the warhead, but we fired it. And it's a new missile that we haven't used before. So all of this, to me, seems like posturing, and it seems like a lead-up to what's going to happen here very soon. Because we can't forget, back in Israel, if Eisenkot forms that government—and the deadline is December 1—Bibi's time is running out.

#Glenn

No, it does appear something is definitely happening here. But let's say, you know, this is correct: the U.S. will decide to go into an all-out war here with Israel against Iran. It's hard to see the U.S. going at it alone this time. I'm sure the Israelis will join in. What does such a war look like, though? If, again, you look at the capabilities being built up, you see how each side is trying to prepare the battlefield. I mean, how do you see it? Will the U.S. go in simply trying to destroy everything? Will they seize islands? Will they use regional proxies? Will the Iranians strike Diego Garcia? Will they go after bases in Europe? What is reasonable to expect based on their capabilities and how they're being used currently?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, the joint force staff within U.S. Central Command and the U.S. Joint Staff have prepared and have been updating options. That's what the staff does. You don't present the commander a choice. You present him options. So I think, you know, Brad Cooper was in Israel yesterday talking to the chief of the IDF, the chief of Mossad, and some of the senior commanders within the IDF, such as the Northern Command commander and the Southern Command commander.

The newly appointed commander of the International Stabilization Force going into Gaza, Major General Jasper Jeffers, U.S. Army, was there as well. So there's much going on. Also, consider that Israel just launched a new offensive into Gaza as phase four of the operation to completely eviscerate, ethnically cleanse, and clear out Gaza. So that's happening now, too. But if you look at what Cooper was there for, he wasn't there because he wanted a homemade knish. He was there because he was going over these plans: “Hey, this is coming up. We've got to confirm we're all on the same page: Israel's role, the U.S. role.” Here's the other thing that's kind of concerning.

The United States just spent $40 million on 17 containerized bunker systems to go into the region. And out of those 17, 10 of them are going to Israel. Ten. So that should indicate to everyone that, one, we have a lot of U.S. troops on the ground in Israel. And two, once again, we're prioritizing Israel's protection over the protection of our troops in Saudi Arabia. We're sending three to Saudi Arabia. We're sending two to Jordan, and we're sending two to Kuwait. We're sending 10 to Israel. So the Secretary of Defense has ordered that those be in place, complete and ready, within 45 days. So we've got that clock going. We also know the number of days until December 1st.

If Eisenkot does not form that government, then Herzog will task Netanyahu with attempting to form it within 26 days. Either way, Netanyahu is still in power until at least, at least the 1st of December. So that time window is approaching, and look at everything that's happening. Nothing indicates that we're stepping back from the brink of all-out escalation and war. Now, what does that look like? Well, in those courses of action that the Joint Staff has presented to the National Command Authority—the president, the secretary of defense, and the chairman—the options are becoming more limited the longer we stay where we are, fire missiles, run out of missiles, and run out of options, as Iran also counters and takes away what we can see.

Within those warfighting functions, like I mentioned, intelligence—meaning the ability to see and know where the enemy is and what they're doing—is getting degraded. So when you look at that in terms of how this could look, could it be that the United States and Israel are going to launch an all-out, all-hands-on-deck attack? Every aircraft—F-22s, F-35s, F-16s, F-15s—every fueler in the air, strategic bombers, bring it all in. And we're just going to saturation-bomb or carpet-bomb.

Iran, including nuclear facilities, power generation, water purification, civil infrastructure, bridges, and headquarters buildings in the middle of cities—even leveling some cities with either MOPs or MOABs, likely MOABs, because that's what they're designed for, and potentially using MOPs against Pickaxe Mountain or other nuclear facilities. But even in doing that, Iran is so big that we don't have enough munitions to saturation-bomb all of it from the air. If you go back to what the United States attempted in Vietnam with Operation Linebacker One and Linebacker Two—the carpet-bombing campaigns along the Ho Chi Minh Trail or along the border with Cambodia to try to root out the underground tunnels and the capabilities of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese—we failed in doing so.

So the United States and Israel may attempt to do this by air, at great cost and at great loss. And in doing so, we'll not achieve a military victory. Iran will not capitulate to this. I mean, heck, we've already assassinated the supreme leader, the ayatollah, and his family, attempted to assassinate the new ayatollah, and he's still around. We've attempted to decapitate the IRGC, and they're stronger than ever. And their missile and drone capability is going gangbusters. They're producing. So who thinks this would work? It won't. And that's going to bring us right back to where we are now: what to do? The other option is that the United States and Israel conduct unconventional warfare.

UW, as part of this bombing campaign, where in the south, U.S. forces—likely Marines, MARSOC, Marine Special Operations, Green Berets—take on advisory roles. You know, your Navy SEALs, your Delta Force—they do direct action, strategic raids, hostage rescue. Green Berets, Marine Special Operations Command—that's unconventional warfare. That's getting on the ground, boots on the ground, assisting, advising, enabling, and accompanying indigenous forces. So we have those forces in the area. We know that.

So those options could then be, in addition to the aerial saturation bombing, the airstrikes, the precision munition strikes—basically putting all we have into that—we then enable and empower the Baluch Liberation Forces, the Baluch Liberation Army, within here to cause maybe not a full invasion, but to draw IRGC resources to the south, where you can then hit them with naval fire. The naval fire here is not going to reach here or here. So this is where that air campaign would come through. This is very reminiscent of the war plans for going into Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War under Schwarzkopf and Colin Powell, and what it looked like in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, with your main force pushing and then your shaping effort moving in another sweeping—you know, the anvil and the sweeping hammer type of move.

And really, doctrinally, that's called a pincer movement, where you're massing your forces to collapse and then destroy the enemy. So could that be possible through indigenous forces, the Kurds and the Balochs? Maybe. We have the forces there. We have the relationships there. We have the CIA operating there. We have the things in place to be able to do that. So is that one of the options on the table? We can't discount that. We can't say, no, that wouldn't happen. And then there's the other option. I'm not ruling this out, although it's unlikely now, but there is the option of boots on the ground: U.S. forces going into Iran, either at Qeshm Island, then onto the coastline.

And it would make sense when you consider how much we've been hitting Qeshm Island and the coastline, Bandar Abbas, because if you can get Marines or amphibious assault forces onto Qeshm, there would be heavy losses. They would get hit hard. But if you can establish air defense capability and defensive capability, and then get just enough launchers there, you're no longer, you know, having to rely on your naval precision fire or your aircraft going in. You can get some precision launchers there with our remaining PrSMs and JASSMs and ATACMS. Well, then, now you've established another front that Iran has to contend with.

And if you're doing that, you know, here's Qeshm Island. In addition to this, well, then that could deal a heavy blow to Iran. But it's still not going to lead to a military victory to solve this dilemma. There's no solving a dilemma. It's a bad choice or a worse choice. You're trying to choose the least bad of the two or three. And that's where the United States now finds itself. So a large-scale ground operation—not unconventional warfare through advising, assisting, accompanying, and enabling, but a large-scale conventional force onto Qeshm Island or in the south—it would be a fool's errand to try to launch amphibious assaults, you know, up here into Kharg Island.

That would be, you know, stupid. So a ground invasion into Qeshm or in the south would be costly, devastating. But I wouldn't rule that out. Now, I wouldn't see that being the next step, but I could see the next step being an air campaign, a limited ground campaign to advise, assist, enable, and accompany indigenous forces in the south and the west, northwest, followed then by potentially conventional forces into Qeshm, conventional forces into Sirik, further south, to then establish firing points to bring in strategic fires to then range further. So then you have ground fire, air power, and basically two anvils of indigenous forces to try to then attack within.

And even that will not achieve military success. It didn't work in Afghanistan. It didn't work in Iraq. It didn't work in Syria. It didn't work in Vietnam. And now we're contending with a country that's much larger, much more populated, and much more densely populated in certain areas. And then there's the terrain. We cannot achieve a military victory, even if we put everything into it. So I do think the conflict is going to go on. I do think it's going to escalate. I do think all sides are saber-rattling and demonstrating: "Look what we've got. Look, we've got this missile. Look, we have the new Minuteman III." That demonstration was to show that the U.S. can fire the Minuteman III from the U.S. and hit Iran.

If you look at the distances, though, I don't think we're on the brink of a step-down. Now, it's possible that behind the scenes, between Putin's bilateral with Trump, Xi Jinping's bilateral with Trump, and then Xi and Putin's bilateral together, there's some serious, frank, clear-eyed diplomacy going on because of everything that I just described. These military planners know this. So could there be diplomacy working in the background? I hope so. But if not, this will escalate, and it will continue for quite some time. At a minimum, this war is going to see 2027.

#Glenn

I see. Well, it's hard to know the intentions, which is why we often have to read the capabilities instead. But if you look at the Iranian side, you mentioned these strikes they've been carrying out against American radars. How successful are these attacks? I mean, what kind of impact can we assess they've already had?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, despite CENTCOM saying that the drone attacks Iran has carried out over the last four days haven't been successful, that's just a lie. We see it. The strikes in Bahrain did hit targets. The strikes in Kuwait did cause casualties. We had a mass-casualty medical evacuation—a mass-casualty medevac. A C-17 was deployed there to pick up soldiers who were dead or critically wounded and move them from Kuwait to a Role 3 military medical facility in Germany. We know that. So their strikes have been successful. And remember, it's very likely that, in that escalation of capability, they're using the Shahed 101 or the Shahed 107 to reach those targets. You don't need to break out the big stuff to go for that. You don't need to break out the ballistic missiles.

You don't need to break out the long-range precision munitions. You don't need to break out the long-range drones like the Shahed 136 and 238 we've heard of throughout this conflict, or even their new ones, like the Shahed 149, which we know they have. They've demonstrated it, but they haven't used it against us yet. So there's a lot of known unknowns where we know, well, they have that. We know it works, but we don't know what it's going to do when it's launched at us to

overwhelm our capability. So there's a lot of unknown knowns. There's a lot of known unknowns. So when you look at this going forward, Iran is having an effect. And that's the critical thing to remember.

You're looking at striking a target, or you're looking at striking a radar, or striking a headquarters, or striking something. It's not necessarily about what weapon you use, how much you use, or what it looks like when it hits. The key is the effect that the mission is meant to accomplish. So if I see this big radar system and I want to destroy it, destroying it doesn't necessarily mean hitting it enough to completely turn it into rubble and wipe it off the map. If I know where the critical component of that radar is and I hit that, it doesn't work. Lights out. I don't have to use everything to destroy it. I have to know where to hit it. And again, in the warfighting functions, that's where intelligence comes in.

And if you look at the warfighting functions of protection and intelligence, China and Russia are providing a lot of that to Iran. So they're not blind, and they can see these things. They can see in real time where these things are. And of course, they have the intelligence to know, "Okay, what's that radar? Okay, let me look that up. That's this. What's the critical component on that? Okay, it's there. That's where it normally is. Okay, hit that. Oh, lights out. Good. We achieved the effect. We don't have to fire anymore." So sometimes when you look at these sites, and they show some of these sites, CENTCOM's like, "Oh, they didn't do anything."

And you see, like, this small black hole through the top of a roof. Oh, they had an effect. It may not look like it, you know, in the mind's eye of a lot of people who haven't been in war or seen war or been on the ground receiving incoming ballistic missiles, which I have experienced and seen. It may not look like what you would think of in the movies, you know, the big explosions and wiping everything out. Sometimes it's a missile that you don't hear until it hits. And when it hits and you look up at the hole, you're like, "Where did that even come from?"

I remember in Afghanistan in 2014, we were in a TOC, and it was hit by a rocket that the Taliban had fired. We didn't even hear it coming in. On the receiving end, you don't hear that. And when it came in and hit, we had no idea what it was. Everything inside was destroyed. And, you know, we're coughing and trying to figure out, "Do I have all my limbs?" And you look up, and the hole in the ceiling was only about that big. So effect is the key, not necessarily what it looks like. So when you look at the strikes on Bahrain and you look at the strikes on Kuwait, Iran has had an effect.

#Glenn

I'm thinking, though, about what you're describing: this rapid shift in technology, the lack of transparency in terms of what weapons the Iranians have. You know, it's underground. We don't really know to what extent the other great powers—that is, China and Russia—are providing intelligence services. You can put disinformation into the mix as well. With all of this in play, there's so much room for miscalculation. This is why it's such a dangerous endeavor to, again, go back to an all-out war. But how do you see this general struggle between American technological superiority

and the Iranian strategy of managing very well those technologies it actually needs? And, you know, at least going for quantity at a low price. I mean, how does this play out in a war? Or at least, what kind of uncertainty does it introduce?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, what we are witnessing in real time, day by day, month by month in this conflict—which is very common in large-scale conflict—is both a military revolution and a revolution in military affairs. MR and RMA are different things. In the U.S. military, we're seeing a military revolution in terms of realizing, well, shit, what we thought was going to be the way to win a war isn't working. So we're seeing this revolution in how the military is now doing things. It's not all about long-range precision munitions only. You know, we went and created the LUCAS drone, copied directly from the Shahed.

So now, RMA, or revolution in military affairs, is how you apply those new tactics. A clear example would be in Iraq, right? We go into Iraq. We conduct large-scale combat operations, LSCO. We wipe out the Iraqi army. We're there, and now all of a sudden we find ourselves in a counterinsurgency. And the military revolution within that was COIN doctrine—C-O-I-N, counterinsurgency—3.0 operations, COIN doctrine. That was a revolution for the military: figuring out how we do that in these urban areas against this type of enemy, different from Vietnam, different from that insurgency that we were countering. And then when you look at how we dealt with that, well, we created new armor.

We created new detection devices, you know. But for the first two years of the war in Iraq, we were going in with light-skinned Humvees, and speed was your friend: get through the kill zone. We then came in with vehicles that had about, you know, two feet of armor on them. These devices included everything from the Rhino, which would stick out with a heat source ahead of the vehicle to try to trigger a heat-triggered IED, to electronic jamming, to everything you could think of. So, a military revolution and a revolution in military affairs—we are seeing both in real time on both sides. Iran is doing the same thing.

They've seen, okay, we have this drone capability. Wow, that's working really well. Let's make more of those. Let's make some that can go further. Let's make some that can hit harder. But also, let's make some that are smaller and cheaper that we can use to harass or hit targets without wasting a lot of our money, because we're learning from America that it's a bad strategy to just think you can buy your way out of this war or spend your way out of this war. But we're also seeing, within Iran, the growth of that mosaic architecture of their command and control. And again, within the warfighting functions, leadership, command and control, mission command—that's the thing that brings everything together.

In Iran, that's this mosaic structure that we've seen, this asymmetric structure. They're still exercising that. But we're seeing now, at the command level—not only at the operational level but also at the tactical level—more autonomy to address the various threats. So we are witnessing, in

real time, a military revolution and a revolution in military affairs between the United States and Iran. And the world is watching. China and Russia are watching. North Korea is watching. Everybody is watching to see what we're coming up with, how we're developing. And you know what? China and Russia are adapting to that. China is taking lessons and adapting to it already without having to fire a single bullet.

#Glenn

Well, thank you so much for taking the time to unpack this complex reality. But I can't help but agree that all of this is happening now. It doesn't bode well. It signals something different.

#Anthony Aguilar

Yeah, we return to war. And I don't know what that escalation will look like, but I could be completely wrong. Again, this is just the opinion of one man who's not on the field, who's not in the dugout. I'm up in the stands watching the baseball game like everybody else, having played 25 years of baseball, so I kind of understand what I'm seeing. But, you know, I can't say for sure beyond what I'm observing. From my position, I think most would agree that what we're observing right now—nuclear missile tests, more aircraft carriers, new munitions, moving munitions here and there, Brad Cooper meeting with the Israeli leadership in Tel Aviv—none of this seems like pulling back or moving towards peace. Not to me, but I could be wrong.