

Anthony Aguilar: Israel's Failed Attack: Why Ali Al-Tahrir Hill Can't Be Taken

#Nima

Just hours before, we had a very, you know, sort of, we had two sides fighting each other in Lebanon, in the southern part of Lebanon — Israeli forces, the IDF, and Hezbollah. The fight was so heavy. Looking at the, you know, footage and the pictures coming out of southern Lebanon, basically what Israel was trying to do was in the region close to Al-Tahrir Hill. Al-Tahrir Hill is so strategic. It's some sort of castle, if I'm not mistaken. And the importance of the location is, you know, this is the, you know, they tried it five times before, and last night was the sixth time. You know, they failed to achieve the objective, the Israelis.

The importance of Al-Tahrir Hill is that this is a large Hezbollah fortress with dozens of underground tunnels and many elevated shooting positions. It has the upper ground — you go there and you can see all over the region. There are some reports that they have some sort of leverage even toward the northern part of Israel. They can see the northern part of Israel — that's the importance of this Al-Tahrir Hill. And just moments ago, Iran was in communication with the United States. They were talking to each other and there was a lot of pressure.

We just, two hours ago, learned that they closed the Strait of Hormuz again to put pressure on the United States. And the IDF, after receiving a lot of pressure from the United States, which came from the Iranian pressure on the United States, announced that the ceasefire is coming back. In the last 24 hours, I would say more than 10 times they said, we have a ceasefire, we don't have it, we're fighting. And Israel, by the way, just announced 20 minutes ago that they were considering the ceasefire, but the problem is they're going to stay there if Hezbollah attacks them, and they're going to respond.

This is the sort of situation they're facing, the two sides in Lebanon. You can say as long as Israeli forces are in the southern part of Lebanon and these sorts of fights are happening, it's because Israel is there to achieve something. What is that? To destroy Hezbollah's positions, to destroy the southern part of Lebanon — the homes, everything, the houses there, the villages and cities. This is the agenda on the part of the Israelis. But when it comes to the situation and the way that the United States is trying to communicate with the Israelis, I know that you're aware of what's going on between the Trump administration and Israeli officials. What is your understanding of that?

#Anthony

Well, it seems that any effective communication or dialogue between the Israeli administration and the U.S. administration is certainly firewalled right now, I guess the best way to say it, between egos, between claims of sovereignty, claims of not agreeing with the memorandum of understanding for the deal that the United States would make with Iran. So I think that communication and diplomatic channels are strained because really, from Israel, from the U.S. perspective, we don't have an ambassador who is in Israel who is willing to have conversations with the Israeli government on behalf of the United States' interests. We have an ambassador in Israel who sides with Israel over the United States.

So you really don't have that diplomatic balance of representing American interests. And the truth be told is that this agreement, this memorandum of understanding to Israel, forged the path towards an agreement eventually—an actual treaty or armistice or official ending of the war—and the terms to it are in America's interest. When most Americans look at it, they say, well, this is a surrender. This is a loss. And that's true, it is. But at this point, for what the United States could have hoped to ever have achieved, this is in the United States' interest to end this war on the terms that are currently on the table, because the terms will only get worse the longer this goes on.

Israel has a vested interest in continuing this conflict, keeping the United States and Iran in a military conflict. It does not meet Israel's interest to have the United States and Iran in a ceasefire or a stalemate. Look at North and South Korea. North and South Korea have been in an armistice, a ceasefire, for over 70 years. They're still technically at war. So when you look at this, can a ceasefire still exist but the war hasn't ended? Well, of course it can. But that is not in Israel's interest.

Israel's interests, based on their own political interests and their own geopolitical interests and their own Zionist interests, are that the war continues directly, kinetically, between the United States and Iran, which in a way allows Israel to continue its military operations in southern Lebanon with little attention or deflection. So the United States doesn't really have an honest broker or a diplomatic representative in Israel to represent U.S. interests. In these negotiations, or in the 60-day planning for what the deal will be, we have Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff, highly underprepared and underskilled to conduct diplomatic negotiations with Iran.

And then, in terms of, you know, the diplomat we have in Israel, he doesn't represent U.S. interests at all. So the United States is kind of in a position right now where we were a few days ago, where I said that the United States is at a point where it must make a choice: Israel first or America first? To stick with this deal that the United States has made with Iran in the eyes of the world, or violate it, not follow it, and continue in conflict, whether it's kinetic or cold, with Iran, with the Strait of Hormuz always in question, with sanctions and releasing of assets and all these questions going back and forth in this, which could be a cold conflict or a hot conflict—to choose sides with Israel. So the United States has to make a choice.

I think we're now seeing clearly, and I said this a few days ago, and I said it last night on another panel, another interview, that Iran doesn't have to respond with missiles and bombs. They have something much more powerful and much more effective than a hypersonic missile or a ballistic missile or even, quite frankly, a nuclear weapon—the leverage of the Strait of Hormuz to shut it down at will. And there's nothing that the United States Navy can do about it without high-intensity conflict, which is not in the U.S. interest either. So we're seeing right now, with what's happening today, Iran using its leverage. Okay, fine. Israel was continuing its fighting in Lebanon. We are not going to meet you in Switzerland.

We're not sending our team to meet you in Switzerland to start talking about this deal when you aren't even meeting the first steps of this deal or this framework. Continue, and there'll be further consequences. Okay, continue. In this moment, what were Iran's options? Conduct strikes in northern Israel, conduct strikes at the headquarters or central government buildings in Tel Aviv to send a message? Sure. All of those things are on the table. But what is really going to compel the United States to compel Israel to stop? The Strait of Hormuz. So, Iran has clearly understood the assignment and understands what has been learned in these previous 108 days of conflict—kinetic conflict—as to where the critical factor is. What's the lever? And they figured it out.

And if the United States doesn't make a clear choice soon, there's multiple levers that Iran can manipulate here. There's the Strait of Hormuz. There's kinetic strikes—maybe not against Gulf nations, because most of the Gulf nations, I think, at this point are like, yeah, we're done with the war here, let's figure out a way to exist and normalize relations. So specifically, you're going to have Israel as a sore thumb, as a target directly. But then there's also the Strait of Bab al-Mandab, with Ansar Allah having leverage. These are things where the real pain can be inflicted upon the United States, not necessarily through bombs and missiles, but through the economy and economic leverage. That real pain hasn't even been realized yet.

And Iran still has the ability to turn the dial. So what we're seeing right now is Iran's response to the continued military incursion and military operations in southern Lebanon that, to me, seem to be escalating. Since this agreement, or this digital signing last week, and this ceremonial signing in Versailles late last week, it doesn't seem like the fighting in Lebanon has—it doesn't seem like withdrawal or leaving to me. It seems like it's escalated. And this was something that I had mentioned before, that just because we see tactical military forces on the ground moving into positions that may look like you're moving back geographically on terrain doesn't mean that operationally you're intending to withdraw. It could be a consolidation of forces to continue offensive operations.

That's how combined arms maneuver and wide area security work—maneuver. So I think we're going to see continued escalation in the south, which organically, when it comes to Israel, leads to further escalation in the region, which could be strikes in southern Beirut, which then again is another red line. So I think the way Iran is approaching this, which is the way I would do it if I were

Iran and I were a strategic planner and offering them military advice, I would say, you know, south of the Litani River where Hezbollah is fighting, the levers that we'll use to invoke a response from the United States to put pain on the U.S. for what Israel does will be the Strait of Hormuz or other economic levers.

If Israel starts to strike north of, or looks like military operations north of the Litani, or once again towards Beirut—which organically it looks like it may go there if they're still targeting specifically Hezbollah leadership—then Iran can always step it up to where kinetic strikes directly against military units in northern Israel or even in Tel Aviv, while also inflicting further economic pain on the United States. So that's how I see this going. And right now, the United States is still very clearly not willing to stop Israel from doing what it's doing. Can the U.S. even stop them?