

BOWMAN: Welcome and thank you for joining us today. I am Brad Bowman, senior director of FDD's Center on Military and Political Power. We're very glad to have you all join us here today, both in person and online for a discussion on the West Bank.

In the past 12 to 18 months, we've seen a steady uptick in violence in the West Bank. Many contributing factors have been cited, including a frustration with the status quo, particularly among young Palestinians. Rival factions competing for dominance, and of course external forces fomenting violence.

A mosaic of terrorist groups, some backed by the Islamic Republic of Iran, have found the West Bank ripe ground for plotting violence and attacking Israelis. It's now clear that the Palestinian Authority has lost control of parts of the West Bank.

FDD's Israel program recently produced a live and comprehensive map showing the timing and location of violence perpetrated by terrorists, as well as responses from Israeli security forces. You can find a link to that interactive resource on the event page on FDD's website. It is an impressive resource in my opinion, and I encourage you to take a look at it.

Today we want to dive in a bit more into the details to discuss both what the data shows and how we got here, some context. More importantly, we're here to discuss what American and allied policy makers can do to reduce violence and promote stability. Before I introduce our speakers, a bit of background about FDD.

For more than 20 years, FDD has operated as a non-partisan policy institute focused on national security and foreign policy. FDD is a source for timely research analysis and policy options. We host three centers on American power in the areas of military and political power, economic and financial power, and cyber and technology innovation, all with the aim of producing actionable research recommendations that strengthen security of the United States and its allies.

As an important note, FDD takes neither foreign government nor foreign corporate funding, and never will. Today's program hosted by FDD's Israel program is one of the many we host throughout the year. For more information on the work we do, we encourage you to visit our website at FDD.org.

With that, I'm pleased to introduce our panel today. My colleague, Enia Krivine, serves as senior director of FDD's Israel Program and National Security Network for mid-career professionals. She joined FDD after nearly seven years at AIPAC and has also had previous experience working on several political campaigns, and as director of Congressional Affairs of the Israel Allies Foundation.

Next to her, retired Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus served in Israel Defense Forces for 24 years as a combat commander in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. As a military diplomat, foreign relations expert, and spokesperson he's delivered hundreds of security and strategic briefings to foreign groups and dignitaries in Israel. Today, he's a member of the Israel Defense and Security Forum.

Last but not least, my colleague, Jonathan Schanzer, serves as senior vice president for research at FDD. Jon previously worked as a terrorism finance analyst at the US Department of the Treasury. He's written four books on the Middle East, including his latest book, *Gaza Conflict 2021: Hamas, Israel, and 11 Days of War*, which challenges and corrects some of the wildly inaccurate news reported during that conflict.

By way of format, I'll moderate a conversation with today's panelists for about 40 minutes or so, and then I'll give the audience here in person a chance to ask any questions for the remainder of the time.

With that, I'd like to get started, if that sounds good. Again, welcome, and excited to sit down with all of you. Jon, if I may, I'd like to go to you first, perhaps to further set the stage for our discussion. Perhaps an understatement, there's clearly a tense situation in the West Bank right now. If you wouldn't mind, could you walk us through the series of events that led us to where we are today?

SCHANZER: Sure. First of all, thank you. Pleasure to be on the dais with all of you guys. Thank you all for joining here in person and online.

I think if we want to look at kind of more recent events, this recent wave of attacks started in March. There were a series of attacks that took place across Israel, Jerusalem, Be'er Sheva, and a couple of other places. They were ramming attacks, stabbing attacks, a range of different violence perpetrated by Palestinian actors that ended up killing 19 Israelis. This was between March, and I think May.

Over a two-month period we watched this uptick in violence and the IDF made the decision that it was time to go into the West Bank to try to address the root cause of these problems, to target some of the most active militants and to look for the cells and the operational centers, and they launched an operation called Breaking the Wave or Wave Breaker, depending on how you want to translate it, and that's been kind of an ongoing thing ever since.

Now, on the one hand, this has been, I think, a very positive thing because the IDF is now doing what the Palestinian security forces has not been able to do. Right?

There are actually now pockets of the West Bank that are really no-go zones for Palestinian security forces. It's really difficult for folks to answer, let alone operating there. The IDF is the only force that is capable of doing so. We're talking about places like Jenin, Nablus, and Tulkarem, and these are major population centers in the West Bank.

On the one hand, Israel's taking care of business and neutralizing threats. The problem of course is that this is not exactly welcomed by rank-and-file Palestinians. Right?

The everyday Palestinians who are watching the IDF going into the West Bank, going out of the West Bank, arresting people, killing people, et cetera, they're outraged because this is the territory that they have decided is going to be their homeland at some point in time. It's an affront to the Palestinian nationalist movement, but it is also helping the Palestinian authority maintain the control that it cannot control right now.

Amidst all of this, there are ongoing questions about leadership. Mahmoud Abbas is now well into his 80s. He is 19 years into a four-year term. He is not exactly the picture of health, he quit smoking, but now he's vaping. He's fallen asleep in meetings and does not bring to the job the sorts of energy and attention that really is required, but he's become an Arab strongman in every sense of the word.

There was a time where there was an active competition for those that might replace him. What we're hearing right now is that those would be competitors are less interested in taking over the West Bank while things are out of control. I mean who wants to take control of a territory where there are no go zones and there are active terrorist attacks and

things like this. Leadership is flagging on the Palestinian side. The terrorist attacks continue, the Israelis get involved. You can get a sense that it is very volatile.

The last thing that I'll just say is amidst all of this, we've got a change in Israeli government, and this Israeli government is not well loved by the Palestinian population.

Now there are those that are saying right now within the Palestinian population that their violence is a direct response to this incoming government and their policies. This, of course, I think goes against everything that we've been watching since March. It's a very convenient excuse for explaining what's happening right now, but don't let that blind you to the fact that the current dynamic right now could feed additional violence as tension grows.

BOWMAN: Just a few things going on, and just several actors involved. Let's dig down a little bit more on those actors. Enia let me come to you if I may. What are some of the groups that are taking up arms in the West Bank, and from your perspective, what is motivating them?

KRIVINE: Right. I think before you dive into that, I think it's worth taking just a step back and talking about the Palestinian security forces. We have in the West Bank a situation where there is a police force, a security force that is intact. The history of that is in the seminal peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in the early nineties, the Oslo Accords, it was mutually decided there should be security forces in the territories that were responsible for their own security.

And we had a couple iterations. The first iteration of these Palestinian security forces were under the leadership of Yasser Arafat, who was a revolutionary guy and the leader of the Palestinian movement for decades. And that was in the lead up to the second intifada. And during the second intifada, you saw these security forces taking up arms against Israel, against the IDF.

And in the course of that large scale uprising, which officially lasted for about five years, the security forces were largely decimated. And when Mahmoud Abbas came to power and there was this new hope for peace on the horizon and more international - coming into the problem set, it was decided that the Palestinian security forces would be rebuilt with the help of the United States and the international community. I think the Europeans are in there, and I think Australia, a couple others maybe, but led and spearheaded by the US. The US has been actively helping to professionalize the Palestinian security forces with the goal of creating a situation where you have a Palestinian security force who have a monopoly of arms in the territories and especially in the West Bank. Gaza's a little bit of a separate story. We'll talk about the West Bank for now.

Currently there are about 30,000 estimated security forces in the West Bank under the control of the Palestinian authority. It's one of the highest police to civilian ratios in the world, but it's been fulfilling its mandate for over 15 years now of trying to keep the status quo.

Now in that context, you have groups that want to destroy the status quo, and a lot of those are known to us. We have Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others, like Brad said, a true mosaic of actors with different motivators. But they've all been on the scene for a long time, and they've all been working at disrupting this modus vivendi that the Palestinian Authority and Israel have created and has resulted in relative stability. And I use the word relative stability very purposefully.

Who are these mosaic of actors? Like I said, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, many of whom are based in Gaza at the moment, but they also have international leadership in the Palestinian diaspora.

A couple of things of note that are different, I think in this most recent wave than they have been in the past. I'll start with something called the Lion's Den and folks who watch this space may have heard that name.

It was a new phenomenon, and I was watching it last year and there was an arc of the Lion's Den. It began in September when a very charismatic young Palestinian man who took up arms against the IDF, against Israeli security forces was killed and went out in a blaze of glory. And in his memory, they formed this group of, it's almost like a street gang.

These are very localized kids, young guys that grew up together that decide that this is going to be their response to these nightly raids that the IDF has been launched to defend their homes, defend their territories, defend their town. And these guys were, like I said, young, extremely charismatic, and were able to use social media to gather a very impressive following very quickly. I think within a couple of weeks or maybe months, they had more followers on TikTok and Telegram than Hamas had built since the beginning of those platforms. Like I said, they were new.

And another very interesting thing about these guys, which I found particularly worrying, is that they were not affiliated with the traditional terror groups that we're familiar with. These groups and these organizations tend to be very factional and these guys' message to the people in the West Bank to Palestinians was drop the factions, pick up the rifle, we're all in this together and in an attempt to collectivize the movement, and I thought this was a very troubling indicator around October of last year, they weren't big, they were always very localized in Nablus, they were probably around, I think it was estimated 20 to 30 at the time, and they were carrying out some pretty lethal attacks against Israelis.

The way that ended was within I think a 10-day period, the IDF went in and took out most of their leadership either through arrests or firefights. The PA, I believe, ended up arresting or bringing into their fold one of the leaders who was wounded. And it still goes on, but not at the level or - not functioning as high level as it did late last year.

That's one interesting phenomenon and I think it's something to watch because these guys really had a romantic inspirational presence in the Palestinian mindset. And you see polling, which shows that they were very loved and popular among the Palestinian people in the West Bank. I would say that was one thing that stood out and something to watch is it's unclear what's going to happen with that.

The other really interesting phenomenon, which I think played out last year is what Hamas was doing. Hamas has always been present in the West Bank. There's a political wing and a military wing. This is pretty common with some of these organizations, and their base is in Gaza, they're sovereign in Gaza, they rule it, and it seems that they've taken a much more pragmatic course with the way they're handling Gaza.

It's been pretty quiet on the Gaza front. It seems like they're working towards rebuilding from the last conflict with Israel and they look like they don't want to get into a direct conflict with the IDF. However, in the West Bank, they do seem to be making gains and they do seem to be increasing in popularity and they do seem to be perpetrating more and more lethal terrorist attacks in the past couple of years.

That's a new strategy of Hamas, it's been identified, and Jon and I have heard it from the right people in Israel that this is something that they believe is going on, that they've consolidated their power in Gaza and now they have their scope set on the West Bank. That's another troubling phenomenon.

Again, the Palestinian security forces should be equipped to deal with that. We've seen a little bit of deterioration of their hold on the monopoly of arms like Jon and Brad said. Jenin and Nablus particularly are two centers that seem they've completely lost control. We're watching it, we're not sure how it's going to play out, but it seems that for now there does seem to be some equilibrium and things are moving forward in the same way.

BOWMAN: Thank you, Enia. That was outstanding. I really appreciate that. Lieutenant Colonel, let me come to you if I may, interested of course, in Israeli perspective. What is Israel's perspective on everything that we're discussing here and how is this wave of violence perceived on the ground in Israel?

CONRICUS: Happy to be here. And I think what both of you said is very agreeable. I would only add one thing about the Lion's Den and the new organizations is that they are, and I think this point has been made also by Joe Truzman, that they are better equipped and kitted than any other new terror organization or local gang that I've seen, which could lead to the fact that they have different types of funding than your normal other type of local Palestinian militant or gang. And it's something to watch.

They also have had a longer run and - the efforts made by the IDF that Enia just described happened, but then they seem to have resurged a bit, which also indicates that they have strong funding and may not only be a local thing. And I know that Israel is also looking at the connections between those organizations and others and outside funding, not only Hamas but possibly Iran.

And we've also seen a tremendous increase in smuggling of weapons through Jordan over the Jordan Valley with the target destination being militant organizations in Judea and Samaria in the West Bank. There's been a three - fourfold rise over the last year in successful interceptions. And as a derivative of that, we can understand there's also been a significant rise in the successful attempts to smuggle across weapons.

That's happening, more weapons coming in and there's definitely outside powers that are fueling violence in Judea and Samaria. Connecting with what Jonathan said, that there are interests to focus international attention on what's happening in Judea and Samaria because of the narrative of this current Israeli government that is perceived to be much more oriented on this issue. And then that could conveniently overlap with more weapons, more energy, and a loss of control of the Palestinian Authority of various areas. And that could bring the situation to a boil or a confrontation over whatever pretext, Temple Mount, some other horrible incident.

And so far, the Israeli security organizations have been very successful once they kicked in gear after this first wave of attacks that Jonathan described - very good at undermining, preempting attacks, ISA, Israeli police, and of course the IDF working together in inter-agency operations. But we know that it takes one successful large-scale attack with a few Israeli casualties to really turn a combustible situation with totally different dynamics. We've been there in the past.

What I think is quite remarkable is the tempo of operations of Israeli security forces night by night, raiding, attacking various locations based on very specific intel generated by the ISA, acting upon that in order to preempt. But what's different this time to previous rounds, first or second intifada or in the years after that is that usually after a continued phase of Israeli operations, you usually see a significant decline in enemy activity. This time we're not seeing

that. And again, that would indicate that there's more - things fueling than regular, and Israeli troops are looking at that and assessing what that is. There's a lot of vectors that really can combine to a combustible situation.

BOWMAN: Thank you for that. You mentioned Joe Truzman, our FDD colleague. He's done absolutely great work on this and if you're not tracking his scholarship, I encourage you to do that. You also mentioned narrative. I heard you use the word narrative. I'd love to come back to you on that if I may. Based on your previous job, how would you assess some of the international media coverage of the situation in the West Bank?

CONRICUS: I think it is the level of scrutiny and international focus on what's happening between Israel and the Palestinians, I think has no peer in other ongoing conflicts in the world in terms of how long it's been at the center or very close to the center of attention and how much attention, the amount of journalistic brain power and financial power that is focused on covering this event.

And my subjective experience over the years has been one of a very challenging situation to tell an Israeli story and to get the Israeli perspective reflected in international media. Many times I felt that it was a set piece from the beginning, whereas there was an event, something happened, almost no matter what evidence, information or details Israel would provide, I could have written the story before it was published, knowing what the headline would be and how critical and challenging it would be about Israeli policy, tactics, the use of force by Israeli troops and everything else related to Israel.

I am a very strong believer in journalistic freedom, oversight, and I think it's crucial to hold every country and every government responsible for its actions, especially the use of force. But I think that many times that coverage of Israel is perhaps tailored in advance and unfairly critical towards Israel in its use of force, while it is after all, and many people have a tendency, or many journalists have a tendency to forget this, defending its homeland, its citizens against attacks that are up close and personal.

Israel isn't on an expeditionary mission 3000 miles away from home. Israel is defending its borders and its citizens and that is something that many times gets lost in media translation.

BOWMAN: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I hear you suggesting that we've had instances in the past of terrorist groups conducting kinetic operations that are planned to achieve an information warfare outcome or objective. Violence in the service of a pre-planned information warfare outcome. Am I hearing you right?

CONRICUS: I think that is by definition what most terrorists want to do. They want to take tactical actions on the ground, compound them by the use of media, and then achieve political aims. I think Palestinian organizations were perhaps amongst the first in the world to do this very effectively on a global scale with hijackings, hostage situations, assassinations.

Hezbollah has done it exceedingly well, and other Palestinian organizations have also done it very well. Charismatic leaders, you mentioned Arafat, but he's one of a few others.

That is definitely what we face, and I think that Israel has to up its media efforts to provide more facts, more intel, more visuals in a way to tell the world what it is that we're facing and what we're doing to face these threats.

BOWMAN: Thank you. Jon, if I may, how is this, what we're seeing now different from or similar to past uprisings or intifadas?

SCHANZER: It's a good question. Let me actually just touch on two things that Jonathan just said that I think are worth highlighting.

First on the question of funding, there is no doubt that there is an Iranian angle to this. We've seen it in multiple reports and in a lot of our discussions with stakeholders around the region.

And there's also a Turkey element to this. For those that are not aware, Turkey, a NATO ally, has been a longstanding patron of Hamas and they have a number of West Bank officials that are based there, most notably a guy named Salah al-Aroui, who has been at the center of a lot of Hamas activity. And it remains an ongoing problem. The Turks and the Israelis are trying to work out a new arrangement between them, trying to rekindle an alliance. I happen to think that that's going to be very difficult to do so long as Turkey is supporting this kind of activity.

The other thing that I'll just note is Jonathan mentioned the tempo of activity by the IDF.

What's important to remember here is, there's this almost nightly activity in the West Bank with the breaking the wave operation, and then there is the ongoing kinetic activity almost every night in Syria, their air operations.

If you think about what the IDF is doing, the volume of its work right now, it is really mind boggling. And by the way, that doesn't even include the cyber stuff. It doesn't include the planning on Iran. It doesn't include the regular security issues. And there's no conflict in Gaza, thankfully. Right now, there's planning for what's going on in the north and Lebanon. There is a massive volume that somehow the IDF is absorbing, and I'm often in awe of the way that the IDF handles multiple threat streams at any given time.

Now, as for the question of how does this compare to past uprisings, first of all, let me just say this is not a third intifada. We're not there yet. A lot of people have been asking this question, and I think it's a fair question to ask, but when we look at past intifadas, there was one from December 1987 until 1991, give or take, and then another one from 2000 to 2005. You could also even go back and look at 1929 through 1936 as another moment of - planned and organized violence by the Palestinians in pursuit of their nationalist aims. In each one of those cases, it was far more widespread, far more organized. Right now, you're still looking at a fairly discrete number of people engaging in this activity.

What I'm concerned about is the hand of Iran, the planning, the funding, the training, all of those things. If that continues, and if it continues to grow, we have a real problem on our hands. The head of the IRGC, Hossein Salami, - said recently that Iran has had its hand in 40 or 50 operations or discreet acts that take place inside the West Bank every day. That is something to watch, that if the Iranians continue to invest in unrest, then we could be well on our way.

Let me just add one more thought here. There's a lot of talk about what that means. The intifada concept, right? An armed uprising, an organized uprising.

A lot of people think about how that impacts regional security, and without question, that's a bad thing. There is a lot of talk about how that would impact Israeli security. The last time there was an intifada from 2000 to 2005, there were people who were blowing themselves up in pedestrian malls and restaurants and nightclubs, and no Israeli felt safe going anywhere.

Getting on a bus in and of itself was an act of bravery. This is of course, something that we're going to have to continue to watch, but what I think has been often overlooked is the impact of intifadas on the Palestinians themselves. And right now, this is what I think we all ought to be looking at.

There is a whole generation of youngsters inside the West Bank in particular that don't remember the last time around. The last time that - kids were out in the streets and engaging in this kind of activity - these kids were just being born. They don't know what the impact is of an intifada. And let me just say it's fratricide, right? You've got young kids going out willingly with the encouragement of family and community putting their own lives on the line.

You've got economic devastation, right? When Israel shuts down the West Bank, that means a loss of jobs. You see strikes happening in the West Bank where people refuse to go to work. That shuts down the economy further. The political situation becomes increasingly unstable. Leadership squabbles among clan, family, and tribe, continue on the streets. Scores are being settled. I've done some work on this in the past, compared the various uprisings over the years, none of them have worked out well for the Palestinians long term. And whatever we're concerned about right now, there's a lot of people who say, "Well, it's an Israeli concern and they've got it coming to them because of whatever the perceived affront is that Israel's doing in the West Bank." This could have devastating consequences for the Palestinian nationalist movement. And it's for that reason that I believe that those that are advocates for the Palestinian cause should be very careful what they wish for.

BOWMAN: Enia did you want to respond to either of their comments before I move on?

KRIVINE: Yeah, I just wanted to add to sort of what Jon talked about - and there's two Jonathans on the stage. The Jonathans mentioned just about the uptick, and this is something that we've been tracking with the West Bank mapping project and separately, so. These are sort of official numbers from Israel that there were 2,500 arrests in the West Bank last year alone. And that there's a really big number. It's a huge uptick from previous years. And when I talked about this steady uptick in violence, we've been looking at the numbers, we do see a steady escalation. But what that hides, if you just look at the sheer number of attacks and responses, is the kind of attacks.

If you can isolate the explosive use of explosives or firearms between 2019 and 2022, you see like a 15-fold increase in the use of firearms and explosives in the West Bank against Israelis. So again, numbers can tell you a lot, and if you're not looking at the right numbers, you can really miss what's going on.

But yeah, a 15-fold increase between 2019 and 2022. And the other interesting metric that the Israel will announce periodically is how many terrorist attacks they've thwarted. And again, that is in the high hundreds for 2022. There's some interesting metrics that just sort of help us understand what's going on.

BOWMAN: Thank you. That's helpful. Colonel, coming back to you, would love to hear a bit more detail from your perspective on how Israel is responding to this violence militarily. And relatedly, do you think the IDF is - Even though we may not yet be at intifada, do you think the lessons from past intifadas are informing current standard operating procedures?

CONRICUS: Yeah, so the first thing that the IDF and the Israeli border police, to some extent, were tasked to do, was immediately to plug all of the different openings and loopholes that exist along the security barrier between Judea and Samaria and other Israeli towns and cities. That was the first thing. And the IDF reinforced that area quite

significantly with around nine battalions. Some of them have now been returned to other duties, training, et cetera. But that was the first task.

Second task was, again, based on previous experience of the IDF, is that whenever you allow terrorist organizations the freedom and peace of mind to plan attacks, then they will do that and they will attack Israeli civilians. Whether it's in Judea and Samaria or in other parts, they will launch attacks further away.

One specific attack was thwarted, I think, with a lot of good grace and luck, in Yafo. An assailant, a terrorist that was sent by the Lion's Den, he had an assault rifle and explosives in his backpack and a Quran and a bandana of the Lion's Den. And he was stopped in Yafo on his way to do a mass attack in Israel a few months back. And that was stopped.

But what Israel has learned - and this is, I think, a common knowledge to other militaries. When you get the terrorists on the back foot and on the run, they have less time to plan attacks and less time to execute attacks. And that is what Israel is doing. So that, in a sense, is one lesson or one directive that is being implemented.

What I think is very important, and as somebody who was a younger man at the time, company commander in infantry, the years of the second intifada running up to the second Lebanon War were years where the IDF and again, connecting to tempo and scope of operations, IDF was all in fighting Palestinian terrorism in Judea and Samaria and hardly had time to train and prepare for other missions. Now, unlike other militaries in the world, the IDF doesn't have that luxury of focusing on one mission and one mission only, but it has to be very diverse and ready for various threats to operate in various dimensions and theaters of operations. And the IDF paid a significant price in combat capabilities in the second Lebanon War as a result of extended fighting against Palestinian terrorist organizations in Judea and Samaria in those years running up.

Something to be aware of is how should the Israeli defense establishment balance the situation, imminent threats, and the need to operate in Judea and Samaria as opposed to long-term military core capabilities of a maneuvering army against bigger and more menacing threats.

Currently, the Syrian armed forces do not pose a maneuver threat from Syria towards Israel. That used to be the standard military threat that Israel faced over the years. That is currently not on the map, but Hezbollah has cross-border capabilities and maneuver capabilities, special forces capabilities, drones, directing fires capabilities, and that is a much more potent military threat than the organizations in Judea and Samaria.

Something to be very mindful of is how to balance between operations and being ready and fit for other missions, of which there are many. And combat in urban terrain, mountainous terrain in Lebanon is another one that Israel needs to be ready for every day.

BOWMAN: That's excellent. Reminds me of the experience of US forces in the last 20 years where we had thousands and thousands of our service members in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of them conducting missions that they weren't trained for. And their core skillsets atrophy over time because they were doing something else. And meanwhile China was doing what they were doing, and Russia was doing what they're doing, so getting the training that you need to conduct the mission and the skillset you're intended for, and then also the balancing act that I hear you're discussing, which is very much on the fore mind of the Pentagon right now is being ready for today's mission and modernizing to prepare for tomorrow's missions. And when you have a finite budget, that's easier said than done, isn't it?

CONRICUS: Yep.

BOWMAN: Yeah. Excellent. Jon, you talked about Iran earlier and I'm happy to come back to you if there's anything you want to add, but just as I hear you three talking, I always try to put myself in the shoes of our allies and trying to understand their perspective.

And I wish we had a map here. If you look at a map, the role of Iran is just - I mean, to state the obvious, is just pervasive. We have them supporting Hezbollah on the north with their tens of thousands of rockets, some of those being precision guided. We have them trying to establish a new front in Syria. And you talked about the pace of operations in Syria. We, of course, know about Iran's support for Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and we know about their smuggling at sea.

And now we're talking about potential activity in the West Bank. It's basically every direction if I'm not mistaken. And so, as a country that has to go thousands of miles away to preempt threats, I'm somewhat empathetic to a country that has to go 20 miles away to preempt threats. Anything you want to add about Iran's role in all this?

SCHANZER: Sure. Well, in 2021, we had that 11-day war between Hamas and Israel. And during that conflict we began to see little snippets of revelations about Iranian activity in stoking some of the violence that was taking place inside Israel proper. What we would call mixed cities, cities where Arabs and Jews were living together as well as parts of the West Bank.

It was described as a nerve center that was conducting this activity or planning this activity. And the more we dug, and we scratched at it, and I've got a piece, by the way, in *Foreign Policy* that came out, I think, in the fall of last year, where we describe what is at least known about this. But the nerve center exists. We're not sure if it's one room or several buildings or if it moves or if it's a virtual nerve center, but it's based in Lebanon.

It's a combination of brain power from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of Iran as well as Hezbollah and Hamas. And their goal is to coordinate violent activity inside Israel's borders and in the disputed West Bank. They do that by doing outreach to the various terrorist organizations. They do it by doing outreach to various communities that are perhaps more susceptible to their message. They have been smuggling weapons across the border, the Jordanian border, primarily, into the West Bank.

And by the way, those weapons - it's been really interesting to watch. First of all, there's the problem of the smuggling through Jordan. And Jordan has a very long border with Israel. It's not particularly well guarded, and it's an ongoing problem because other things are being smuggled into Jordan, such as drugs, Captagon in particular for those who were following that problem set. And those drugs are trickling into Jordanian society causing real problems.

It used to be that Jordan was the transit point for Captagon where the pill would be sold for 20 bucks a pop in places like Saudi Arabia and UAE. They're now selling it in Jordan for about \$5 a pop, and they're willing to take that haircut because it's an effort to destabilize a country that's allied with Israel and allied with the United States. We've got an ongoing problem there with the Captagon.

The weapons, of course, this is how the Lion's Den and other groups are able to get their hands on these weapons. It's primarily Hezbollah-driven. But what was also interesting that we've seen over the last couple years is how some of these weapons are making their way to the Arab Israeli community.

Now, we haven't really seen the Arab Israeli community take up arms against Israel, but really, a remarkable sort of side effect of all of this is that we're watching a murder rate go up among Arab Israelis themselves. We're seeing killing within the Arab Israeli community. The homicide rate is through the roof. And so the Israeli police have been struggling to get a handle on all of this, but this all points to an effort by Iran to try to destabilize Israel from within.

And this is all within the context of what we would describe as the war between wars or campaign between wars, where the Israelis are trying to target Iran in places like Syria, on the high seas, in cyberspace, trying to erode their nuclear capabilities and things like that happening all around the region. And meanwhile, the Iranians are trying to draw closer and closer in to Israel's borders with massive amounts of weaponry, but also infiltrate Israel's borders themselves. So, this is an ongoing battle. It is a quiet, asymmetric battle that is happening and has been happening for the last seven or eight years.

BOWMAN: That's a great point. And just from my perspective and with reference to you, Lieutenant Colonel, it just seems essential to me for Israel to maintain freedom of action in Syria to deprive Iran that additional front that-

CONRICUS: Critical.

BOWMAN: It's not negotiable.

CONRICUS: Yeah.

BOWMAN: Yeah. Very good. I'm watching the clock and we'll go to questions here in about 10 minutes or so, but this is just too good. I want to keep you going a little bit more, if I may.

Switching gears. Jon, coming to you, Israel's newly appointed minister of National Security, Itamar Ben-Gvir, recently toured the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, sparking criticism from some Arab governments and others in the international community. What should we make of his visit? What impact might this step or future steps like it from the new government in Israel have on the situation in the West Bank?

SCHANZER: Good question. And look. We could probably hold our own panel on this new government-

BOWMAN: Thirty seconds or less.

SCHANZER: -drawing a ton of criticism obviously around the world right now. I think maybe a couple things to point out.

First of all, people keep talking about how this is the most right-wing Israeli government era ever. They've said that after every election for the last 10, 12 years. I think it remains to be seen exactly what this government does. I think there are intentions by a handful. We have this party that now has significant sway. It's called the Religious Zionism Party. It's actually a bloc and there are two figures. It's Itamar Ben-Gvir, who you mentioned, as well as a guy named Bezalel Smotrich. These two guys, I think, are going to be hogging the microphone. They're going to be drawing a lot of tension.

But just before we jumped to any massive conclusions about this government, they pulled in roughly 500,000 votes during this most recent election. It got them 14 seats out of 120, and so they have significant sway within the government. But let's just put this in perspective. They pulled in roughly 10% of the vote. They didn't pull in 50% or 75% of the vote. It was 10% of the vote, which is roughly the size of Israel's settler community, which means the system's

working. I mean, people are saying it's the end of democracy. Actually, it's a pretty good reflection. It's an accurate reflection of Israel's democracy.

Now the question is, what are they going to do? And here you can see, I think, there is a deliberate attempt to try to message to the international community and to the Palestinian community, "Hey, we've got a claim on the West Bank." Now there are a lot of people who are going to say, "Well, that's an illegal occupation." According to the letter of the law, actually not. It's a disputed territory. It's a territory that the Israelis captured in a legal defensive battle, in a preemptive battle in 1967. They've attempted to hand that territory over through peace multiple times over the years, and the Palestinians have rejected it.

It's an ongoing problem. It's not one that I think every Israeli relishes. In fact, many would probably like to relinquish this problem, but short of having a peace partner on the other side that one can trust, the Israelis are not quite ready to do so. And as long as that continues to happen, you're going to have people like Ben-Gvir and Smotrich come out of the woodwork. They are going to say, "Well, you know what? We don't have a peace partner, and so therefore we should lay claim permanently to this, and we should be able to walk on the Temple Mount. We should be able to plant our flag wherever we want." And this is the ongoing domestic dialogue inside of Israel. It should not be a surprise to anyone.

The last thing I'll just say on Ben-Gvir. You might not like the timing of what he did, you might not like the messaging of what he did, but for a Jewish Israeli to walk on the Temple Mount, which is considered to be the holiest site in Judaism and is also considered to be sovereign territory of Israel, it's pretty hard to say that he violated any laws. You may not like the message, you may not like the way he conveyed it, but certainly, from our perspective, I don't think anybody would tell us that Americans can't walk where they want inside our own country. We'd be hard pressed to accept that.

BOWMAN: For the audience, if you have not read Cliff May's column from yesterday, "Walk Like an Israeli," it very much relates to this. You might be interested in checking that out. Anything, Jon, you want to quickly say about Jordan's response to the Temple Mount visit? Just in addition to what you've already-

SCHANZER: Yeah, I mean, I came out with a research memo last month. It's called Neither Here Nor There: Jordan and the Abraham Accords. Jordan is a problematic jurisdiction right now from my perspective. The Jordanian rhetoric as it relates to Israel is getting quite a bit nastier than it has been in recent years.

For those who need a quick refresher, the Israelis made peace with the Jordanians in 1994. And for many years it was the warm peace that Israel enjoyed in the Arab world. Since 2020, since the Abraham Accords, we have new countries that have come in and have captured the mantle of the warm peace. UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, things are a bit warmer there. And that is in stark contrast to what we see out of Jordan, where every Ramadan, the rhetoric ratchets up. Every time there is any kind of dispute over the Temple Mount, things in Jerusalem, even the Gaza Strip, you see the king, you see the royal court, the prime minister, the foreign minister engaging in rhetoric that does not make Jordan look like an ally.

They continue, I think, to stoke this conflict in ways that are not helpful. If Jordan really was acting in the best interest of the region, in the best interest of the US-led alliance, that sort of rhetoric would be saved for quiet discussions. We know the king does not like Benjamin Netanyahu. There is no love lost there. There is no bromance. Okay? We can accept that, but the idea that they need to be yelling at the Israelis in broad daylight, I don't think is befitting of an ally and certainly not one that is trying to protect a US-led system in the region. And so, my counsel is for Jordan to dial it back. Whether they do so remains to be seen.

BOWMAN: To be seen. Enia, Israel's new finance, Mr. Smotrich, said earlier this week, quote, emphasis on his words, not mine, "As long as the Palestinian Authority encourages terror and is an enemy, I have no interest for it to continue to exist." Is this attitude toward the Palestinian Authority a departure from policy of previous governments? And how will this affect the ability of Israel to cooperate with the Palestinian Authority going forward?

KRIVINE: Thanks, Brad. So yeah, he said those words. I think it is a departure from previous governments, least to say it so explicitly. But this act by Smotrich, I think would put in the category of acts of the new government, which were sort of campaign promises and things that are widely accepted and potentially even popular within the Israeli body politic, right? The idea that a Jew can walk on the Temple Mount, this is consistent with the status quo agreements between Israel and the Waqf, the Jordanian organization that controls that holy site for the Muslims. Again, not a violation of the status quo.

And this other one is interesting. There's been a long-standing policy of the Palestinians to pay the salary of terrorists in jail. So, you have a terrorist, he commits an atrocity against an Israeli soldier or Israeli civilian, and he goes to jail and then he receives a salary for him and his family, for his time spent. And the worse, the more egregious, the more heinous the crime, the better the salary.

BOWMAN: And this is called Pay to Slay?

KRIVINE: It's called Pay to Slay. Right. That's the shorthand. And it incentivizes terrorism. You don't need to be a genius to understand that. But we also know, anecdotally, from hundreds of stories that when terrorists are deciding, "Oh, should I go and blow up this cafe? Let's see what's going to happen. Now my family is going to be lauded and I'm going to be famous and they're going to get this wonderful salary for the rest of my time in jail." This does play into the cost-benefit analysis of whether to blow yourself up in a cafe. So, it's a pretty reprehensible policy. It's been going on forever.

Fast forward to 2016, an American tourist in Israel, a graduate of West Point, his name was Taylor Force, was stabbed to death in front of his fiancé on the beach front in Tel Aviv by a Palestinian terrorist. And this was a turning point in this conversation. And folks like Jonathan Schanzer and myself have been sort of screaming this from the rooftops for a long time, "Pay to Slay is reprehensible." And US taxpayer and Israeli taxpayer money is going into these coffers.

But when Taylor Force was killed in such a brutal way - this American kid, a veteran, it kind of woke us all up. And we were sort of aware of the conversation. Many in Washington weren't. And the US passed a law called the Taylor Force Act. Former President Trump signed it into law in 2018, which essentially would put an end to this policy. So, the US taxpayer dollars could not go to the PA until they stopped this policy. And that was a good thing. I think everyone can agree that you don't want your taxpayer dollars going to the salary of someone who murdered a US serviceman in front of his fiancé in Tel Aviv.

Israel modeled on the Taylor Force Act, the law, created its own legislation that it would also withhold funding to the PA as long as they continue with the Pay to Slay policy. So, it's an Israeli law modeled after US law, which was triggered and inspired by the murder of Taylor Force. When Smotrich decided to withhold this money from going to the PA, hold it and instead he's going to send the money to the families of victims of terror, consistent with the Pay to Slay law that Israel passed in 2018, that's when he made these comments. It was in the context of, "Well, this

is going to destabilize the PA.” In fact, he was implementing law that is consistent with US values and law, and those were his comments.

Now it gets into this broader question of what is Israel’s responsibility to the PA and how valuable is the PA and what are they doing to improve or create a stability for Israelis and Palestinians? And I think that’s an open question, but as to these comments, I don’t think they’re helpful. I do think that Benjamin Netanyahu has a record of maintaining the status quo. He is a status quo guy. And so, it remains to be seen how, having Smotrich in his new role in the Finance Ministry, how that is going to play out. And if he continues to withhold this money, implementing existing Israeli law, whether that could potentially have a destabilizing effect on the PA.

So anyway, a little bit of context. I think this falls into the category of things that this new right-wing government is doing, which actually probably don’t deserve the kind of consternation and knee-jerk reaction that they’re getting.

BOWMAN: Thank you.

CONRICUS: Can I just add quickly on that? I mean, if when I put the Palestinian Authority on a time scale and I look at its attitude towards Israel and its actions against Israel, especially in international forums, or fora, I think that what we can see over the years is that they are definitely intensifying and escalating their efforts against Israel in international legal aspects as well as in the media, campaigning and being behind the BDS effort. And without being the spokesperson of, or anything related to minister Smotrich, what I can say is that when Israelis look at what the Palestinian Authority is doing, being a safe haven for terrorists and paying salaries for either convicted terrorists or suicide bombers with stipends to the families, eternal stipends, and leading the international efforts against Israel, when those things are put together in the same equation, then many Israelis look at the Palestinian Authority and ask themselves, “Okay, so what’s the point here?”

If it’s an entity that is totally hostile towards Israel, that teaches its children that Israel doesn’t have a right to exist and doesn’t exist on the maps in school books of Palestinian children, which again, like Jonathan mentioned, has refused numerous very, I would say, sincere efforts by different Israeli governments to end the ongoing conflict politically, all of those things connected may be the foundation for that kind of statement, which I agree probably is exactly the type of fuel that anybody who is looking to demonize Israel and their government really needs. And it’s unfortunate that it’s being displayed that way.

BOWMAN: Thank you for that. For the sake of time, I’m just going to jump to one last question for Jon, and then we’ll go to the audience for questions. So, if you all want to prepare any questions that you have, that would be great. Jon, in light of everything that we’ve been saying here, what should US and other allies be doing to help when it comes to the West Bank? I mean, what would be some policies or prescriptions that you would offer?

SCHANZER: Sure. I think always the right question to ask and always the question that we’d like to answer at FDD. Look, I think first of all, we are probably one of the few countries that does have leverage with the Palestinian Authority, and we should be working to shore up better leadership.

I mentioned Mahmoud Abbas’ seniority problem if you will. He needs to go. We need new leadership there, and the US actually does have some leverage to help line up succession and to think about ways that we can keep the West Bank stable with new leadership. And so that should be something that we really do focus on. The continued training and

funding of those Palestinian security forces will also be crucial, but they need to take the action that is being requested of them, and right now we're not seeing as much of that perhaps as we should be.

We should be working with the Jordanians to dial back on their rhetoric, but also to work with them on that border where so much of the weaponry continues to flow into the West Bank. That is a major issue that the Jordanians should be tackling together with the Israelis and with the United States.

But the last thing that I'll point out, and this probably won't come as a shock to anybody who knows the work of FDD, but the sanctions that we have put on Iran, the isolation that FDD has consistently advocated for the Islamic Republic is crucial.

There was a time here over the last couple of years where the Biden administration was flirting with the idea of getting back into the JCPOA, the 2015 nuclear deal. Had we done that, had we given the Iranians \$275 billion in the first year of such a deal and then \$1 trillion over 10 years, the kind of support that we're seeing from Iran going into these various terrorist groups in the West Bank, it would've put it on steroids.

I think we're very fortunate that we've not gotten back into that deal, but I do believe that the United States does have real work to do in terms of the continued isolation of the regime if ultimately our goal is to stymie their activity in the West Bank, not to mention in places like the Gaza Strip or Lebanon or Syria.

So it's time for pressure. My colleague Mark Dubowitz and my other colleague Orde Kittrie just came out with a 53-page report with 231 different recommendations of ways that we can actually put additional pressure on the regime. We should be looking at every one of those options right now, not just for the West Bank, but rather for the sake of the entire region and its stability.

BOWMAN: Thank you. We talk about those very specific practical recommendations. In the US military, we talk about admiring the problem. What we're trying to do here is not just admire the problem, we want to come up with specific ways to do better to serve US national security interests and that of our allies. So that's the motivating force here.

KRIVINE: Can I just add one more thing to that? I think Jon always knocks it out of the ballpark. I think it's a good way to end it, but I'll add one more thing to that. I think normalization. I think one of the - Why hasn't it become an intifada yet? I mean, what is preventing this from becoming an intifada? You've had IDF going on a nearly nightly basis. It's been the most deadly year for Palestinians and Israelis in a long time. What is keeping the show together here?

And I think there are a couple things you can point to, and one of them is normalization. You have the formal normalization agreements, which FDD has been very in favor of and supporting and nudging along from the beginning. But then you also have these informal normalization. You have Turkey, which is very important, who is now on a charm offensive with Israel for good reason. There's good reason for Turkey to want to build that relationship right now. Energy is just one of them.

And you have this environment where the traditional Sunni allies and the traditional allies of the Palestinian people around the world, in the past intifadas were egging them on and funding them, and providing arms, and trying to find ways to add fuel to the fire. And you just don't see that in the same way now. You see Iran, which by the way, I'm sure that Saudi Arabia and UAE, I don't know this for a fact, but I'm sure they're looking at the Iranian influence growing in

the Palestinian terrorism thinking, "What's going on here? These are Palestinians are Sunni traditionally, and they're now being financed and funded and incited by the Islamic Republic of Iran, by Shiites."

So, I think normal, I think continue to push on normalization, continue to get our more moderate Sunni allies to weigh in in that and continue to stabilize the region is very important.

And I'll also just say very quickly that we talk about the relative success of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian security forces. I think that one of the things that Mahmoud Abbas has managed to do in his tenure is to create a layer of wealth and vested interest in his cronies around him. He is not a paragon for democracy. This is not a Jeffersonian democracy. There's a lot lacking, but he has managed to in a way that Arafat never could or would, he's managed to create enough people with vested interest in the status quo that I think it is having a moderating effect for all of the shortcomings of the PA and for this could all be disrupted with one mass casualty event. So, this isn't necessarily a sustainable solution, but if you're looking at reasons how this hasn't become an intifada yet, I think that those are two big reasons.

BOWMAN: Great insights. Thank you, Enia, and great conversation. Now, I want to invite you all into the conversation, so if you have a question, please raise your hand. Wait for the microphone. If you wouldn't mind standing up and telling us your name and affiliation, that would be great. So, we have a question right here in the back. We'll start there.

GUTMAN: Hi, my name's Ethan Gutman. I'm coming from the Senate side, Senator Cotton's office. The recent OMNI authorized in the \$100s million border security funds for different states in the Middle East, including Jordan. I think it's expected that at a minimum, \$150 million is going to be allocated towards Jordanian border security.

I was wondering what you thought, how could those funds be well used? Have they been used well in the past? Is this just pie in the sky or is this going to have some effectual help with Jordanian border security and just how to make sure there's accountability with how these funds are used or, yeah. Thank you.

BOWMAN: Great question. Thank you.

KRIVINE: Sure. So, I think that the US involvement in the Middle East is a key pillar of national security for the US and for the Middle East. I think that that is - I would argue that continuing to have firm support for Israel and allies in the region is critical. And Jon Schanzer mentioned the border between Jordan and the West Bank. That is a long border. And the Jordanians are struggling right now. They share a border with Iraq. Jon and I were in Jordan in August and having these conversations.

They're watching the West Bank. They're concerned about the West Bank. But that's probably in the top five list of things that they're looking at right now. They've got Captagon smuggling coming out of Syria and huge instability there. They're dealing with a massive refugee crisis, and the international community has not coughed up what they owe for those refugee camps. And I think that Zaatari refugee camp is one of the biggest active military camps in the Middle East. Like I said, the instability in Iraq and all of the terror organizations, the ISIS-inspired Shiite and Sunni terror organizations on their border - So I mean, think Brad and I and our other colleagues are on the same page that US investment in that region is money well spent.

BOWMAN: Jon or Colonel, you want to respond?

CONRICUS: Yeah, I'd say that from an Israeli perspective, I've heard more than one senior general, past general, make the point that Israel, in many cases, Israel's eastern frontier when it comes to serious military threats is actually Jordan's border with Egypt, not in a sense of any Israeli expansionism at all, but in a sense of that is where many-

KRIVINE: Jordan's border...

CONRICUS: Jordan's border with Iraq.

KRIVINE: Iraq.

CONRICUS: Yeah, sorry. So not in a sense of any expansionism, but in a sense of understanding that Jordan is under tremendous pressure, has been over many years by different external factors. Today, it's mostly Iran trying to destabilize and influence and undermine. I think a lot of credit is due to Jordanian security services for holding it together, tremendous internal pressure by a very hostile and unstable Palestinian part of the population, which is around 70%, which is very militant in its outlook, and applying pressure on the kingdom. So, stabilizing and keeping Jordan strong, stable, if anything could be done to strengthen its economy and have more positive traction in that country. That of course, we all know that whenever there's strong economy, employment, jobs, and outlook, that is always a stabilizing factor.

And by the way, connecting to what you said about why isn't there another third intifada because a lot of Palestinians work in Israel. They have permits. They work. They provide for their families, and they have things to think about before taking up arms and going to try to murder Israelis. So, positives in building, that's always great. And it's absolutely crucial that Jordan remains stable. And I echo the very succinct points of Jonathan about also asking or demanding that this type of rhetoric against Israel isn't helping at all and are dangerous in a regional perspective. And that at the end of the day, Israel provides a very large percentage of the freshwater that Jordan uses, that Jordan relies on.

SCHANZER: Don't forget gas, intelligence, military assistance.

CONRICUS: So, I think that there's a large relationship between Israel and Jordan, mutual interests, and I think populist statements and that kind of stuff should be in closed rooms and not aired in the open and fuel instability.

SCHANZER: I'll just add maybe two other quick points. One is that in our conversations with Jordanian security, it appears that for a time they were a bit reticent in terms of direct engagement, in terms of forces on the border and how they engaged. The rules of engagement have changed, and from what I can tell, the Jordanians have been more successful in challenging the smugglers and perhaps some Shiite militias or militias associated with the regime in Iran. But the tactics continue to change, and so now we're seeing delivery by drone, for example, of Captagon or weaponry.

So as the situation continues to evolve, the US should be engaged more. I think there's plenty that we can do; counter-drug technology, satellite imagery, intelligence, things like this. There should be probably fusion centers between the Israelis, the US, and Jordan. I know that that cooperation already exists, but perhaps there's a way to formalize it even further.

By the way, maybe this is a good way of bringing the Saudis in as well. This is incredibly important to the Saudis because they're impacted by these same challenges, and they have a vested interest in the security of Jordan long-term.

But all of these things should also be contingent upon the Jordanians working more closely and more quietly with the Israelis as opposed to what we've seen recently in that shift in rhetoric.

BOWMAN: Thank you for that question. As a longtime recovering Senate staffer, it's always a great, I can't resist. It's always a great question to ask, what is this money intended to do? Is it accomplishing its purposes? If it's not being used the way intended, is it a problem of political will or capability? Those are two very different things. And what would an additional dollar get us, and how would that additional dollar be used? To me, those are all relevant questions here in a Jordan context, and in some cases, I say maybe in an Egypt context as well. Some things we could discuss. Other question right here in the front. Your name, affiliation, if you wouldn't mind.

LIPIN: Hi, I'm Michael Lipin with *The Voice of America*. This is a question for the panel picking up on the last question about the Israeli Jordanian border. So how do Israeli forces patrol this border on a day-to-day basis? I'm curious to know.

And also, what do we know about the identities of the smugglers who are going across the border? Where are they from nationality wise, and also what do we know about how they're physically getting weapons across the border? Jon Schanzer just mentioned drones, which I hadn't heard of before, but is that one of the ways, and what are the other ways that they're doing it?

CONRICUS: Yeah, right. So, the border between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is Israel's longest, around 300 miles, separated in the middle by the Dead Sea, which is crossable, has been crossed in the past by smugglers, and they continue to attempt, but the bulk of smuggling attempts are in the northern part of the border, north of the Dead Sea, in the area that corresponds with Judea and Samaria on the West Bank. System is based on local Bedouins and Palestinians on the Judea and Samaria side and groups and gangs that have either family ties or otherwise ties or affiliations with the receptors on the Israeli side. And it's been escalating, as we said.

On the Israeli side, we spoke about the threats that Israel faces and the active theaters where Israel operates. So, we have active, very active front of 80 miles with Lebanon, with Hezbollah, and then the border with Syria and the Golan Heights is about the same length. Those two borders are heavily guarded with lots of systems, strong fences, and physical infrastructure on the ground. The border with Gaza, equally strong and prioritized in terms of budget. The border that is the weakest link in Israel's defenses is the long border with Jordan for the same reason that Jonathan mentioned before and that we've spoken about because it is a country that we have peace with and very good security relations and cooperation, which I hope will continue.

The issue is that it is a long border with challenging terrain, and in terms of budgeting and infrastructure, Israel hasn't been forced to allocate the same resources out of a strained budget for many other threats that it has along the border. Technologies are a mix of your very old-fashioned bulk delivery and the new and very challenging use of heavy-payload drones. There have been reports of Israel intercepting Iranian drones that were intended to Judea and Samaria four years ago, successfully intercepting those. And that was perhaps a dry run, a trial by the Iranians to import stuff from Syria over Jordan and then into the West Bank. So that's going on as well.

And we're seeing the Israeli defense system challenged by various techniques and procedures from Jordan. But I must emphasize that it's something that Israel and the Jordanian security organizations are working at together understanding exactly as said here that this is a threat to stability. Of course, Israel is the target, but if this continues to escalate, then it is really a national security problem for Jordan as well. So, it's ongoing, definitely a challenge, but happy

to say that there's a lot of inter-agency and international work being done, and any oversight, assistance, and knowledge shared in an American sense is also a good thing.

BOWMAN: Unfortunately, we are rapidly approaching the end of our time together. I wish we had another hour. I've learned a lot and have enjoyed it. But before we move to conclusion, Enia or Jon, anything you want to add here at the end?

KRIVINE: No, I think we've covered it.

BOWMAN: Okay. Jon?

SCHANZER: No, I think Jon, ended it nicely.

BOWMAN: All right, there you go. Well, you get the last word there at Lieutenant Colonel. Well, thank you so much.

Well, thank you all for taking the time to join us here, both in person and online. Hope you learned as much as I did, and thanks for tuning in and being here.

For more information on FDD, our Israel program, and the latest analysis on these issues, we encourage you to visit FDD.org. That's FDD.org. We hope to see you again soon. Thank you very much.

CONRICUS: Thank you.