



American Intelligence and Information Power V. Iran

August 6, 2025

Featuring Reuel Marc Gerecht

Hosted by Mark Dubowitz

DUBOWITZ: Welcome back to “The Iran Breakdown.” I’m your host, Mark Dubowitz. For the second part of my conversation with former CIA case officer, now FDD Senior Fellow, Reuel Marc Gerecht, we shift gears to focus on the critical intelligence developments, the military accomplishments, and the strategic realities against the Islamic Republic of Iran. We’ll unpack the recent joint U.S.-Israeli air raids on Iran’s nuclear program. We’ll assess Tehran’s capacity and willingness to retaliate. We’ll discuss how intelligence is shaping American policy towards the Islamic Republic. So, let’s break it down.

So we’ve talked a bit about, in the wake of this 12-Day War, and this incredible military intelligence success, that there’s now a ferocious dragnet – counterintelligence dragnet inside Iran, going after thousands of Iranians, and just arresting them. Obviously, most of them are going to be innocent. There’s going to be some potentially Mossad agents that they roll up.

And presumably, if Israel has built this, they’ve built a lot of layers and redundancies into the system, in anticipation that there will be a time, where the Iranian counterintelligence services are going to go into a much more aggressive mode.

I mean, I would have thought, again, not having worked in Intel like you, but I would have thought, that as of last year, April and October of last year, when the Israelis struck Iran, and they took out [Ismail] Haniyeh in an IRGC [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps] safe house in Tehran, and they found Nasrallah, and the top command of Radwan in a bunker, and killed them, after all of that, and more, you would have thought the Supreme Leader would have put his top nuclear and military and intelligence command on highest alert. OPSEC [Operations Security] would’ve been through the roof.

And when the Israelis finally go after the regime in June, they find that it’s much, much more difficult to find these nuclear weapons scientists, find the IRGC commanders in this condo, in that bedroom, when this drone goes up and takes the shot. And I just would have thought, “All these guys would have gone to ground.” But they caught them literally and figuratively, in their beds. It’s just fascinating to me. Why?

GERECHT: Well, I mean, I think—

DUBOWITZ: You understand—

GERECHT: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: You understand the Islamic Republic’s mind, right?

GERECHT: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: Is it arrogance? Is it complacency? Is it just sloppiness? What went down?

GERECHT: I think it’s all of the above. I mean, one, culturally, I think it’s very hard for Iranians to maintain that level of vigilance. I mean, it’s hard for anyone.

DUBOWITZ: Right.

GERECHT: I mean, entropy is a natural state for the species. So I think it’s exceptionally hard in the Middle East. And there was unquestionably a level of complacency about Israel’s reach that you would think, after what had happened, they would have been more concerned about the possibility of the long arm of the IDF, and Mossad.

DUBOWITZ: Do you think they respect the Israelis as an enemy? Or do you think they’ve spent so many decades demeaning and demonizing these quote, “Jews,” who are not capable of actually doing the kind of damage against the Islamic Republic. Well, I mean, I find, just in my experiences over the years, that when people have Jews on the brain—



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GERECHT: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: –and that they buy into these conspiracy theories, that analytically, it's very toxic. It really distorts your ability to understand the problem set, right?

If every explanation is, "Well, because the Jews control media and control Hollywood," I mean, there's a lot of those conspiracy theories inside the Islamic Republic. Certainly, they target FDD with many of these crazy conspiracy theories.

And it seems to me that if that's the way you understand the world, then you're not going to be prepared, when the Jewish state comes at you, because you've spent so long in this conspiratorial mindset, and down these crazy rabbit holes, that you can't assess the strengths and weaknesses of your enemy. Is that fair?

GERECHT: I mean, that's an excellent question. I don't know if I have a good answer for that yet, but it's an excellent question. Undoubtedly, openly, the Islamic Republic has wanted to downplay Israel, because it is demeaning for them to play up its capacity, its ability to threaten the regime.

Now, whether that actually plays out at a lower level, the professional level, I'm not certain. I would need to have someone on the inside sit down and do a debriefing with them, to feel confident in saying that that sort of attitude at 36,000 feet helped to cripple them at a lower level. It's possible.

DUBOWITZ: I mean, it's Khamenei. You've written on this, and you and Ray Takeyh, who we've had on our show before, have written on this. I mean, it seems to me to be the antisemitism of Khamenei, and presumably, the Guard Corps at the highest echelons, right? This real, visceral, obsessive hatred for Israel, and for the Jews, it has to be analytically distorting.

GERECHT: It is. Though at the same time, if you make the Jews omnipotent, I mean, you should fear them. So it cuts both ways. So, again, I don't have a good answer to it. I think it's certainly possible that they just didn't go there, and didn't analyze it as well as they should have, because antisemitism got in the way? But I'm not certain.

But I think, also, they were rather careless and carefree in analyzing the Americans. So I think they had operated with an assumption that the Americans would check the Israelis.

DUBOWITZ: Well, say a few more words about that, because I find that really interesting. I mean, I think you've explained to me, in the past, that the regime spends a lot of time trying to understand America, and understand the political dynamics in America.

And one could forgive them for thinking that the new Trump administration, and the new coalition that supports Trump, and some of the loudest voices in that coalition would have checked Trump, who would have checked Bibi, who then would have again, had he had in the past, backed down in ordering these military strikes against Iran's nuclear program. If you're an Iranian, you're sitting in Tehran, and you're trying to understand our political dynamic, and you're hearing these loud voices, the sort of Tucker Carlson wing of the Republican Party, right? Which has been making a very, very vociferous case, that war with the Islamic Republic is not only illegitimate, but it would be an absolute disaster, would cause World War III.

And then you're watching Trump, who, since he's come in in January, been sort of all over the map on the Iran issue, even though he is consistent in saying Iran will never get a nuclear weapon, but so have many other Presidents, and is that–

GERECHT: All.

(LAUGHTER)



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DUBOWITZ: And all other Presidents, and is that really true, and is it meaningful, and are they really going to do what's necessary to stop it? You could forgive the regime for getting analytically confused.

GERECHT: Absolutely.

DUBOWITZ: And assuming that Trump is going to do nothing, and if he's going to do anything, it's going to be to stop the Israelis from doing anything.

GERECHT: Yeah. No, I fully understand Iranian confusion. I mean, we're confused here. So analyzing the United States is always extremely difficult. I prefer to analyze the Islamic Republic, than to analyze the United States. So it's challenging.

Even if you look at Trump I, which is different than Trump II, it's inconsistent. I mean, 2019, he didn't follow through at all, after the Iranians had let loose on the Saudi oil facilities at Abqaiq, and Khurais, and—

DUBOWITZ: And shot down a U.S. drone

GERECHT: And the Gulf shipping, he didn't do that. And then, 2020, he takes out Qasem Soleimani, in Baghdad.

DUBOWITZ: Which reminds me that, just as a amusing aside, maybe not amusing, but I find it amusing. I remember, I don't know how many years ago this was, but you were testifying before Congress, and those were in the days where these committees were brave enough to invite someone like you. And I recall you saying, when it was a Senator or Congressman asked you what we should be doing about Iran, and you said, "We should kill Qasem Soleimani."

GERECHT: Yeah, I did.

DUBOWITZ: And then, what ensued from that? Do you want to tell us the story?

GERECHT: Well, some of the Democrats on the committee protested, but what happened is, it got picked up in Iran, and Parliament passed a measure against me, and—

DUBOWITZ: Wasn't there a whole campaign inside Iran, that, "We are all Qasem Soleimani now?"

GERECHT: Yes, there was a whole campaign, Qasem Soleimani. And then, what I found most interesting, and it totally changed my view of Interpol, is that the Iranians tried to red letter me through Interpol.

DUBOWITZ: Right, an international arrest warrant, yeah.

GERECHT: An international arrest warrant for terrorism. And Interpol—

DUBOWITZ: Which by the way, as an organization at FDD, we were supporting an international arrest warrant against you.

(LAUGHTER)

GERECHT: That's right, well—

DUBOWITZ: We and the regime. Unfortunately, Interpol decided not to comply with it.

(LAUGHTER)

GERECHT: Yeah. Actually, I won't digress to another incident of that, where they were, I said something, and they said, "Oh, take him."

DUBOWITZ: "Take him. Please take him."



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(LAUGHTER)

GERECHT: "Take him," yeah. But Interpol stood their ground. And not only did they say no, they said if they dared do it again, they could eject them from the organization, so ...

DUBOWITZ: But although years later, when Trump, 2020, kills Qasem Soleimani, you actually get designated by the Islamic Republic for the killing of Soleimani.

You become, I think there's eight of us at FDD who have been sanctioned and designated for different things. I'm an economic terrorist. You have good fortune of being designated for being behind Soleimani's killing.

GERECHT: I mean, the Islamic Republic, how do I put this delicately? I mean, they have chronic envy. So if we designate, they want to designate, too. I mean, they want to get it on the act. So yeah, and I mean, you have to take those things seriously.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah, because they're not just going to be, they're not freezing your account at Bank Markazi, and now, you can't visit Tabriz even though you presumably didn't get a visa, when you went I did not in the back of a truck,

GERECHT: No, I did not.

DUBOWITZ: So that's not going to deter you.

GERECHT: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: But certainly, yeah, a designation by the Islamic Republic as an economic terrorist, or being responsible for killing Soleimani, or some of the other things, the wild accusations they throw at us.

GERECHT: The good news is the Islamic Republic, and principle intelligence services, the Ministry of Intelligence, the intelligence service for the Revolutionary Guard Corps, they actually aren't very good operating in the United States. So that's the best news.

DUBOWITZ: Well, they tried to kill our friend Masih Alinejad three times.

GERECHT: I know, but yeah, exactly. And if you look at how they tried to do it, you're not overwhelmingly impressed. I mean, they could have just hired sending a guy with a sniper rifle, and they would have gotten there, but—

DUBOWITZ: God forbid.

GERECHT: Yeah, God forbid. But I mean, just saying, they have never felt comfortable operating the United States. They do better in Europe than they do in the United States. And it's always interesting, because in the early years of the Islamic Republic, and this gets back to a larger issue of whether it's the Islamic Republic, there was probably no country in the West that they were more familiar with than the United States, because of the huge exchange between America and Iran.

So you would think they would be more comfortable in the United States. But the truth is, though it sounds funny, the early years of the Islamic Republic are its most cosmopolitan. You have better people and brighter people, better read, more sophisticated, in a revolutionary way, they're just a—

DUBOWITZ: Well, they've traveled, they've been in the West, they've lived in the West, right?

GERECHT: They're just a more sophisticated lot. As the revolution has aged, they've become ever more parochial. So their comfort factor, their ability to operate in foreign environments, particularly if they're Western, I would argue, has gone down significantly.



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And even outside of their near neighbors, I question whether their parochial nature has not actually gotten in their way of trying to run operations. And I think that will have an effect on how they react now, in general.

DUBOWITZ: I would say the one thing that does concern me, since I am, you pointed out, from Canada, a quote "foreigner," even though I've been here 22 years and have been naturalized, but there's a number of people who reminding us that I'm a foreigner from that foreign country called Canada, the 51st state.

Having spent time in Canada, I would say, that what does concern me from an Iranian, a regime assassination network perspective, is the number of Revolutionary Guard, and Ministry of Intelligence, and other regime officials who have made Canada their home, for their families and their money, who are now operating north of the border.

By the way, intimidating Iranians, who live in places like Toronto, or *Tehranto*, as it's called, and have threatened Iranians, because there's many Iranians there, and the majority of them are anti-regime, but also their ability to operate over the border.

In fact, I think the FBI or ICE, it was ICE, I guess, just caught three Iranians trying to smuggle themselves over the border, from Canada into the United States. And the FBI has been putting out multiple warnings recently about the regime operating here, either directly, or through Hezbollah.

So I hope you're right. I hope they're not as adept as they once were, but it does seem like they're very focused on retaliation.

GERECHT: No, I think, I mean, I would—

DUBOWITZ: They tried to kill a president, yeah.

GERECHT: I mean, I would certainly look at Canada as digression, because the operating environment there, I think—

DUBOWITZ: Is highly permissive.

GERECHT: Is much more permissive, and the Mounties can only do so much. So I would go there. I'd not panic about it, because I would say, if you had to smuggle yourself across the U.S.-Canadian border, do you think you could do it? I'm absolutely confident that you could do it.

DUBOWITZ: Well, knowing—

GERECHT: You would walk right across.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah, knowing me. Well, knowing me, I thought you would say, "I'm absolutely confident you couldn't," because—

GERECHT: No, no, no, no.

(LAUGHTER)

DUBOWITZ: Because, would I survive that crossing from Saskatchewan? That would be tough, especially in the winter.

(LAUGHTER)

But you're right. I mean, it's the longest undefended border in the world.

GERECHT: Right. Right.

DUBOWITZ: Now more defended than it used to be, but still, I mean, there's so many places you can cross. Yeah.



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GERECHT: So, I just don't think, but I mean, to go back to what I would call the big strategic issue, which is worrisome, and that is, because the regime is becoming ever parochial. Because in times of crisis, and I think this is certainly one for the Islamic Republic, I expect them to batten down the hatches.

And for the next generation of the Guard Corps, who are probably the ones who were criticizing the Supreme Leader, for what they thought was his negligence with the nuclear program, for his failure to push it fast enough, these folks, I think, are going to come to the foreground. These are the guardsmen who fought in Syria, who consider themselves, correctly, to have been victorious in Syria, and—

DUBOWITZ: And then not.

GERECHT: And then not. But I mean, they're the ones who, 10 years ago, helped to crush it, killed an awfully lot of Syrian Sunnis in the process, and took a pride in that effort.

DUBOWITZ: And saved Assad.

GERECHT: And saved Assad.

DUBOWITZ: And then boom, Assad goes down.

GERECHT: Assad goes down.

DUBOWITZ: Because the Israelis have decimated Hezbollah.

GERECHT: Right.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah.

GERECHT: So I mean, there's a chain reaction there. And this chain reaction, I think, inside of the Revolutionary Guard Corps, is going to make them harsher.

DUBOWITZ: Let me ask you this final question, because you've written, I've kept count, but we'll get some of our research assistants to count it up, and then we'll put it on a wall, as a Reuel Marc Gerecht—

GERECHT: Don't do that.

DUBOWITZ: —Award, but you have probably written tens of thousands of words over the years, calling on the United States, and/or Israel, to bomb Iran's nuclear weapons program.

GERECHT: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: I led you down this garden path for a few years of sanctions, which you resisted, but then immediately—
(LAUGHTER)

GERECHT: Sanctions have their place,

DUBOWITZ: Sanctions have their place. But for you, it was always very clear, that if you were going to destroy this program, it wasn't sanctions, it wasn't negotiations, it wasn't even covert action. At the end of the day, it had to be a military attack.

GERECHT: Correct.



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DUBOWITZ: And you were proven correct, and good thing that President Trump listened to you, and certainly the Israelis have come around, after years of hesitation, to finally use their military and intelligence power to go after the nuclear program.

GERECHT: But they were given post-October 7th, 2023.

DUBOWITZ: Right.

GERECHT: I don't think they were given any choice.

DUBOWITZ: That's right, right. Everything changed on that day. But you've also written hundreds of thousands of words, by yourself, and also with Ray Takeyh, about regime change.

GERECHT: Right.

DUBOWITZ: About the necessity of bringing down the Islamic Republic of Iran. And are you more optimistic today than you were, let's say, prior to the 12-Day War, about the prospects of that?

GERECHT: I mean, I'm always optimistic that the unexpected spark could create a wave of discontent that could fracture the security services. However, it's probably going to be unexpected. If the regime can—

DUBOWITZ: Which it often is, right?

GERECHT: Yeah, often.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah.

GERECHT: That major protests that have really shaken the regime were, I think, really all of them were unexpected. They just accelerate rapidly, and then the regime is caught flat-footed.

But at the same time, once the regime does focus, it's been pretty good at handling dissent, opposition. And we haven't seen, since 2009, the type of massive street protests that really scare the regime.

DUBOWITZ: But wouldn't you say, Reuel, because I had a guest on from *Iran International*, who runs their news division, and he said something that actually surprised me, I hadn't thought of it this way, that the “Women, Life, Freedom” protests, in his view, had succeeded.

Because I had thought they were incredibly brave, but that it failed. And he said no, they'd succeeded. Because certainly, prior to this 12-Day War, they had succeeded in persuading the Islamic Republic, and maybe even Khamenei himself, that he needed to back off on the hijab, and provide some space for Iranian women to walk down the streets, and show their hair.

His view, based on the reporting of *Iran International*, again, it's coming from *Iran International*, so clearly, they have a certain perspective, but I think, do some really good reporting on these issues, that if you walk down the streets of major Iranian cities since 2013, or sorry, since 2023, that Iranian women more and more were walking around without hijab.

GERECHT: I mean, I question part of that. One, there has been an ebb and flow of the hijab question for quite some time. So, depending upon where you were, women could quite flagrantly ignore it.

DUBOWITZ: Where you were geographically, inside Iran?

GERECHT: Right.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah.



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GERECHT: So—

DUBOWITZ: North Tehran.

GERECHT: Sometimes, the regime would let it go, sometimes, they would respond. I remember, it was in the 1990s, and CNN was doing a — they were inside of Iran. I can't remember whether it was Christiane Amanpour there or someone else, but they were actually showing young women partying, and there were some gorgeous Iranian women, with a hijab down.

And I called up an Iranian friend at that time in Paris, and I said, "Oh, they're going to crack down." Because this was just too blatant. It was on CNN, and sure enough, within 48 hours, they'd cracked down. Now, if it's true that the regime has given up on this issue of enforcing it, and I'm not sure that's true—

DUBOWITZ: But if it's true—

GERECHT: But if it's true—

DUBOWITZ: That's a big deal, right?

GERECHT: It is. But it also could rebound against the opposition, because they have essentially deflated an issue that at any time, might get young women on the streets, and there's nothing the regime worries about more, even though they handled it last time, is that they could kill another young woman, and a spark could go off, and the next thing they know, they got big protests.

I mean, what they did to stop the "Women, Life, Freedom" Movement, which was arresting, torturing, poisoning, and killing young women. It proved effective, I would argue. But it was deeply troubling to the regime, for the simple fact that many daughters of the members of the elite could be in trouble, and they could get killed. So—

DUBOWITZ: But for that reason — yeah.

GERECHT: But if they take that issue off the table, then the regime might say, at least in the short term, "It's well worth it, because it's a spark, potential explosion that we don't have to worry about now." And it doesn't translate necessarily into, "Oh, I got this, I got this, and I'm going to demand something else."

So if you don't see it escalate, if you don't see the demands escalate, if folks say, "I'm going to be satisfied with this, and I'm not going to go forward, and ask for political freedom," and let's remember that during the "Women, Life, Freedom" movement, a lot of folks were effectively demanding the end of the regime.

DUBOWITZ: Well, that's right. I was going to actually say that to you, which is, my recollection was not that they were on the streets only saying, "Death to the hijab," they were saying, "Death to the dictator."

GERECHT: Right.

DUBOWITZ: It was a demand for the end of the Islamic Republic of Iran. So Khamenei, you would agree, Khamenei's fear has always been, that if he gives ground too much on this, he may have to give ground on that.

GERECHT: Sure.

DUBOWITZ: And at some point, it's an escalating set of demands that could bring down his regime.

GERECHT: Khamenei has always understood the potential for the cultural erosion of the state, which is why he's always been careful about that. And he talks about the Western cultural aggression.



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DUBOWITZ: The toxic touch of the West, yeah.

GERECHT: Right, it's because he knows it's true. But at the same time, the regime has been, always, it's been adaptable. So it gives and takes, gives and takes, gives and takes. So, my biggest concern is that if it can use this as a mechanism to actually dampen down dissent, because in the end, if the regime is going to be brought down, it's going to be brought down because enough people hit the streets.

And it overwhelms the capacity of the security services that they in the end, either refuse to kill the number of people required, or they can't. But the sad news is, is I think the regime has been able to find enough young men, it's always about young men, who are willing—

DUBOWITZ: To kill young women.

GERECHT: —to kill others, including young women, to sustain the regime. And if that's true, you don't see that on the other side. I mean, maybe, to the Iranian credit, at least amongst the Persians, you have to differentiate Iranians here, because I think the Baluch, the Arabs, the Kurds, have shown repeatedly that they're quite willing to kill Iranians, particularly the Baluch, or the Kurds. But they can't kill—

DUBOWITZ: Kill regime Iranians, yeah.

GERECHT: —regime security forces.

DUBOWITZ: Of course. Yeah.

GERECHT: But that's not going to bring the regime down. The minorities don't bring, there are only two peoples that can bring the regime down, the Persians or the Azeris.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah.

GERECHT: So you haven't seen that type of willingness to sort of cross the Rubicon. And I think, in part, because they don't want to go there, they don't want to see that level of violence and discord in their own societies.

I actually think it sounds weird, maybe, that there is sort of this exhausted DNA from the Islamic Revolution, and it's wearing away. That is, as we get further and further away from the Islamic Revolution, as we get further and further away from the Iran-Iraq War, that you are getting folks who are willing to risk more.

But I still think in the society itself, there is this view that "we messed it up badly, and we don't want to go there."

DUBOWITZ: So say one final thing on the support base of the regime, because I have long fought, and increasingly become quite focused on, not only maximum support for the Iranian people, the 80% that despise the regime, but is there an opportunity to intensify the existing fractures and fissures inside the support base of the regime, particularly in the wake of the 12-Day War?

Is there a sense inside the support base that, on one hand, you've got people you mentioned, who want to kind of double down on these hardline policies of, "Let's go for the bomb, let's do more devastation than we've done before. Let's go rebuild the 'Axis of Resistance'," or this "Axis of Misery," as I call it.

But then, you've got other people saying, "We invested trillions of dollars in this strategy. It's up in smoke, let's head in another direction." And maybe that other direction is not like Jeffersonian democracy in Tehran, but maybe it's starting to actually question whether this is the right direction.



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And maybe you see changes after Khamenei dies, depending on what happens in this succession. But starting to at least identify, understand these fractures and fissures, and maybe think about ways to intensify them.

GERECHT: It's possible. I mean, Ray and I have this discussion all the time, and the biggest problem, I mean, there are a couple problems. Probably the biggest problem you have is that folks who are really loyal to the regime, who have been loyal to the regime, who have committed sins for the regime, I wonder whether they think they really have anywhere else to go, that their end is going to be bad.

So that means they're going to be committed to it. Now, expand out and say, "Is that true for the volunteer force, not the volunteer force, but the drafted force in the Revolutionary Guard Corps?" I don't know, it's an excellent question.

DUBOWITZ: I mean, if there's sort of Iranian version of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, post-apartheid South Africa, where there were Afrikaners in the security forces who had done, also, terrible things to Black South Africans, maybe on par, maybe not, but at least, in the perception of the Black community, and brutal repression, and to the credit of Mandela and the ANC [African National Congress] at the time, which, of course, has become a very corrupt party, post-Mandela, but at the time, there was an appreciation that "if we're going to avoid civil war, if we're going to avoid real violence," because the security forces for white Afrikaner security forces still had it.

GERECHT: Yeah.

DUBOWITZ: "We needed some kind of Truth and Reconciliation Committee, some kind of process, where some of the people that don't have enormous of blood on their hands can be brought back into the system," and for the most part, it actually worked.

GERECHT: I mean, it is an excellent question. I don't have a good answer for it on Iran. I mean, do I think there is an awareness inside of the Iranian system that they know that everybody hates them, that they know they're corrupt, that they know that they're no longer ruling a society that wants to participate in the Islamic Revolution, and an Islamic renaissance? I think they know these things.

DUBOWITZ: Well, some do, because moving their families and their money to Canada, and other places, right?

GERECHT: Yeah. I mean, they know. But at the same time, I mean, if I were to make, maybe I'll end it on that, I make a sort of a Russian parallel. In 2000, I'm partying in Moscow, right? And I'm at a wonderful, crazy party with a bunch of KGB, GRU officers, past and current.

And we're drinking away. And after a large consumption of vodka, we started having a discussion about the Soviet Union. All the KGB and GRU officers present, I think all of them, were saying the same thing, and that is, they were ashamed of themselves during the Soviet Union. And what they were most ashamed about was how they lied to their children, and that it ate them. It ate their moral intestines.

But I'm also willing to make a bet that not a single one of those folks did a damn thing to bring the Soviet Union down. That when Yeltsin showed the courage to bring the Soviet Union down, they were happy for it to go down.

DUBOWITZ: Did they stay in their barracks? I think that's the question.

GERECHT: Well, I don't know. I mean, I have no idea. But it takes something more than just loathing the regime. It takes a willingness to confess, and then to act on that guilt. And I don't know. And the regime does benefit.



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I mean, we talk about the rise of Iranian nationalism, and how the regime fears that. I'm not so sure, because what the regime, what it has been able to do so far, and that might change, is that the regime has adequately fused Iranian nationalism with Shi'ism.

And that's the real secret of Iranian Shi'ism, is that it's not one or the other, they fused the two together. And you may emphasize more one at one time, more than one at the other.

And if the regime has lost the ability to do that, and that now being Iranian negates the Shi'ite side of your side, then the regime is in deep doo-doo at the lower levels. Because the lower levels of society are profoundly Iranian.

So I don't know. These are open questions. I would say, it would be interesting to try to test it. Whether outsiders can do a great job of that. I don't know. You don't know until you try. But I would say, that's the big question is, will that Shi'ite-Iranian fusion come undone?

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. Well, certainly. I think that's a good moment to end. First of all, I like to end with the possibility of the regime in deep doo-doo.

GERECHT: Yes.

DUBOWITZ: I also like to end where we started, with stories of you drinking huge amounts of—

GERECHT: Excessively.

DUBOWITZ: —alcohol with Russian intel. It's very interesting. Reuel, really a pleasure to have you, fascinating. Over the years, I've learned so much from you about Iran.

Great to have you as a colleague, and as a very good friend. And we're definitely going to have you back.

GERECHT: My pleasure.

DUBOWITZ: Thanks again to Reuel for his insightful analysis of today's intelligence landscape in the ongoing war with the Islamic Republic of Iran. It has historically occurred in the shadows and recently exploded into the open. Understanding the complex game of espionage and the role of intelligence is essential for shaping effective policies.

I'm Mark Dubowitz. This has been "The Iran Breakdown." I'll see you next time, when we break it down all over again.