



Nothing Short of Complete and Utter Dismantlement

September 3, 2025

Featuring Brigadier General (Res.) Professor Jacob Nagel

Hosted by Mark Dubowitz

NAGEL: If, I hope not, but if there will be another round now, this is not the sixth round of the negotiations from before the war. This is the first round with the new rules. As President Trump said, "What was on the table before does not exist anymore. You Iranians take it. There was a war. We're now in a different situation." There is only one way: Have a total surrender.

DUBOWITZ: Total surrender means no enrichment.

NAGEL: No enrichment.

DUBOWITZ: No reprocessing.

NAGEL: No reprocessing. No heavy water. No weaponization. No ballistic missiles. No support for terror. No uranium. No plutonium. No, no, no, no, no.

DUBOWITZ: For years, Washington has debated about how to slow Iran's march towards a nuclear bomb. Negotiate, pause, buy time. But as my colleague, dear friend and guest today, Jacob Nagel, and I recently wrote: The only acceptable negotiation goal is not delay, it's dismantlement. Complete, 100% dismantlement of Tehran's nuclear program. In recent months, Iran has taken a beating from the United States and from Israel. Their nuclear program has been set back dramatically. Their ballistic missile production capability has been almost eliminated. But Iran remains dangerous. And they were just waiting and biding their time to reconstitute their capabilities. Brigadier General Jacob Nagel has been on the front lines of Israel's fight against Iran's nuclear threat since the beginning. He's one of Israel's most accomplished national security strategists.

He served as National Security Advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu, headed Israel's National Security Council, and he played a central role in building Israel's missile defense systems: Iron Dome, David's Sling, Arrow, and others. He also was lead negotiator for the US-Israel MOU, or Memorandum of Understanding, which provided \$38 billion in U.S. funding for Israel's military capabilities. Most recently, he's chaired landmark commissions on Israel's defense budget, and most recently on the national AI strategy. I'm honored to say today he's a senior fellow at FDD. Jacob knows better than anyone else what's at stake and why half measures will not stop the Islamic Republic. I'm Mark Dubowitz, and this is "The Iran Breakdown." So let's break it down.

Jacob, welcome.

NAGEL: Thank you very much. I'm really glad finally to be on "The Iran Breakdown," but as I know, you always keep the best for last or for middle, or I don't know where. But it's good to be on your show.

DUBOWITZ: Absolutely. Well, we have to have a number of other guests in order to give them, our listeners, the basics, the ABCs. Because now we're going to do a master's class, maybe even a PhD class in Iran, their threat, their nuclear program, their ballistic missile program. But Jacob, before we get to that, I want to talk about your origin story because every superhero has an origin story, and you've been a superhero for the state of Israel. Tell our listeners a little bit about how you got involved in national security, when you joined the IDF, a little bit about your career.

NAGEL: Well, you are going back. I didn't think you will go so far. But if you already asked, I'll take 60 minutes to say, because I'm coming from a religious family. I have a wife, I have four children and ten grandchildren. But my late father was the only survivor from the Holocaust from his family, and he always was very proud that he is in Israel, and the family, and his son is an officer in the IDF. I'll remember it all my life that the last ceremony he participated in his life, in 2004, was when I got my brigadier general rank. 2004, May. And I remember at the end of this ceremony, he told me, "Now I can die." He was 88 and he died a few months later. Now why I'm saying so, because he always told me, "Your job is to make sure that what happened to the Jewish people during the Holocaust won't happen again."



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This is our shift to make sure. And what you started, talking about Iran, yes, for me, Iran is like you. I don't think too many people in the world have this as a mission, to make sure that Iran will not fulfill its ultimate goal to annihilate, to finish, to delete, to dismiss. In English, there are many, many good words. In Hebrew, there is only one word. Israel is here to stay and we have to do it. Now, my joining on this doing, because I'm an engineer, I started at Academic Reserve after Yom Kippur War. I spent many years in the 8200 units, the elite unit of the intelligence. I was computer geek, writing software. I never had in my mind to be national security advisor and other things. But life is what God is making happening to you while you are planning. And I found myself, when I was a lieutenant colonel in the Minister of Defense, running all the intelligence programs there.

And then I became head of planning, head of budgeting, and then I became head of military R&D, that really overseeing all the programs that Israel is running. So among them, 2007, one of the Nagel Committees that recommended Iron Dome against all the opposition. If you'll open internet on 2007, you see everyone is saying, "The people there in DDR&D [The Directorate of Defense, Research and Development] are playing games, and we don't have system and we'll never have." And in 2011, four years later, record time, there was the first interception April, 2011. I remember when Minister then Barak called me, I was on my first vacation after a few years, he told me, "Jacob, thank you." And if you know Barak, he never thanks. "So thank you. There was a first interception of Iron Dome." And then he closed the phone. So this is Iron Dome. I was involved a little bit less in the David's Sling.

Arrow, I came after it was started, but I was involved in some of the most sophisticated, most next generation of Arrow. Arrow started before I joined the Ministry of Defense, but I was involved in many other programs. Some of them we can talk, some of them not. But remember, military R&D is everything, is electronic warfare, anti-tank missiles, UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicle]. When UAVs, what they're doing today was only top secret, many, many, many top secret programs that we developed. And again, the DDR&D is working with the Israeli defense industry, with the Israeli IDF, Air Force, Army, Navy Intelligence, Signal Corps, just to bring the best solutions to the state of Israel. And we did some very, very good decisions long ago to make sure that Israel is building the best subsystems. Buying or getting, like you mentioned, the MOU, getting the really generous support of the United States by the main platforms, like the fighter jets or other, from the United States, putting inside the Israeli subsystems. Like missiles also, air-to-ground, air-to-air, the best in the world.

So making those platforms the best in the world. And of course we share with the US whatever they want. And now I'm coming to Iran because when I moved to the prime minister office 2011, I was the Deputy National Security Advisor for Defense and Strategic Affairs. And then in 2012, they put me in charge on the Iranian file, together with people from the MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], from the IDF, from the IDI, from others. And I remember as of today when we orchestrated, General Amidror was then the National Security Advisor, I was the deputy.

And we orchestrated what we call the expert team of trying to make sure that the world is not doing a mistake negotiating with Iran. Unfortunately, and I will finish in a second, this is the introduction, we came in 2015 to a big failure. We have to make sure that today we won't do the same failures. My expert team did a lot to try to stop and not doing these failures of the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]. We did some changes, but the US led by Obama administration was, and John Kerry and others, they were totally obsessed of having an agreement. And then we found ourselves with this JCPOA in 2015. We have to make sure we are not going again to do the same mistake.

DUBOWITZ: So Jacob, I met you more than two decades ago, at the time of these JCPOA negotiations. Maybe even earlier, the JPOA [Joint Plan of Action] negotiations, the interim agreement that was reached in 2013. I think when we met the first time, we had what you call in Star Trek, a Vulcan mind meld, is when your minds come together because you are in full agreement. And I think we were in full agreement about the fatal flaws of that initial agreement. Now, fast-forward to



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2025 and a few months ago, where Israel just demonstrated extraordinary military and intelligence capabilities during the 12-Day War, and the United States, finally an American president, after all these years, American president since Bill Clinton claiming they'd never allow Iran to get a nuclear weapon, and yet never being willing to actually use military force to stop it.

President Trump came on the scene and said, "I'm with you Israel. Israel, you go, you demonstrate success." And then he famously said, "We own the skies." Israeli pilots are using extraordinary American military equipment. And he then made the decision to bomb Fordow and Isfahan and Natanz, with our very special massive ordnance penetrators that did significant damage to the program. So I want you to talk a little bit about that 12-Day War. What was accomplished by the United States and Israel? What kind of capabilities can you discuss publicly that were on display? And how much damage was done not only to Iran's nuclear program, but I think also to their ballistic missile capabilities? Which in many respects, I think were as dangerous and as big a threat to the state of Israel as their nuclear program.

NAGEL: First of all, you are totally right that we are going forward from 2015 to 2025. We can learn a lot from 2015. Maybe we'll come to it later, but let's go to 2025. I want to emphasize one thing that you said, and I want to remind you some of our talks few months ago before the war, during, of course, the war in Israel. But you asked me, "Do you think that President Trump will use American force to attack Iran? Don't you need to ask President Trump to give you a B-2, a B-52?" And I'm sure you remember those talks between us. And I told you, "No, I don't want B-52s. I would love the US to use them. Israel should not have them for its own. Again, if the US will loan us those planes for a few hours, I will take them."

DUBOWITZ: Now, just to be clear, just so for our listeners to understand, what we're talking about are America's strategic bombers.

NAGEL: Strategic bombers, the B-2.

DUBOWITZ: Particularly.

NAGEL: Particularly the B-2.

DUBOWITZ: That actually are these stealth bombers that are capable of dropping these massive ordnance penetrators.

NAGEL: They're the only ones that can take those massive ordnance penetrators, the thirteen ton bombs that not too many of them existing in the world. And a huge chunk of those that existed were used on Iran. And what I want to change is that the viewers, the listeners to us will understand one very important. And now I'm putting the Israeli view. I think I told you the American, but it's not that Trump joined Israel on Israel war, Israel have a long national security strategy. I know that people are laughing when I say so and others say, Israel will defend itself by itself. Now, when I say, "defend itself by itself," I mean that I don't want American soldiers to die on Israeli soil when there was Biden and then Trump, others, sending air carriers, sending American, even air defense system like THAAD and Aegis to defend us. It's not contradicting what I said before because I don't want an American soldiers to die.

But in this case, it's much easier because it was not the President Trump joined Israel on Israel war. President Trump a very smart president, he joined Israel on an American war. Israel started the war. Israel would go to this war even if we would know that US won't join. Of course we wanted the United States – people call it green light, but I call it go ahead. And we got this go ahead. But even if the United States were not joining us, we start it. Why? Because the Iran threat on the United States as the leader of the democratic world, and the United States citizens, is almost the same. Now, yes, Iran is not threatening to eliminate the US. They know their limits. But they want to hurt the United States.

DUBOWITZ: Well, they have, Jacob. I mean, it's worth pointing out that—



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NAGEL: In the Gulf, for example.

DUBOWITZ: –the Islamic Republic has killed and maimed thousands of Americans.

NAGEL: Exactly.

DUBOWITZ: Both our troops and our diplomats, as well as civilians. They've been at war against the United States since 1979. They yell, "Death to America," as well as, "Death to Israel."

NAGEL: And they are building ICBMs [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile].

DUBOWITZ: And they're building intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are nuclear tipped missiles that are not aimed at Israel or the Gulf, they're aimed at the United States and our homeland. And clearly a nuclear armed Islamic Republic is a grave threat to America and American interest. So I think that's right.

NAGEL: So it was a joint interest between Israel and the US. And now I'll go back to the war itself. And President Trump allowed Israel, as you said, to own the sky, to make sure that the air defense, the strategic and then even some of the tactic air defense of the Iranian country, starting from Syria, going all the way to other countries, and then to Tehran and all the facilities in Isfahan, Qom, Natanz and many other places in Tehran, to be eliminated. This was the first and second waves of the Israeli Air Force eliminating those threats against Israeli and then later against American planes. And he joined.

But it was a huge – when I asked, when I told you yes then, that I think it's something between 50% to 60% that Trump will join, everyone thought that I am a lunatic. Even 40% was science fiction. No, Trump understood and he joined us. And now what happened there? Look, I'll go back. The Iran regime did very big two or three mistakes. On April, 2024, they attacked Israel for the first time, sending 350 flying obstacles, cruise missiles, UAVs and ballistic missiles against Israel. It was the biggest air attack on a country, on a sovereign country, by a country that is also a member in the UN, 350 air obstacles.

Most of them didn't reach Israel for many reasons, and it was a joint defense from Israel, mostly 75% around Israel, and then the coalition. And Israel responded, I don't want to spend the time on why we responded and how, but we responded by sending a message, "You sent 400, did nothing. We send four, we do a damage of some very important place." They didn't understand the message.

On October 24 they did another attack. This one they understood that the cruise missiles are not working. And of course, the drones, none of them worked. So, they used 200-plus ballistic missile, because those were the only few that penetrated. And this time, because of many reasons, more penetrated. Still, almost no one died, one Bedouin because of shrapnel, but now, a lot of civilian damage. And then Israel attacked, neutralizing the strategic air defense of three, not everything, of Iran.

And then at the end of this attack, and I'm not going to elaborate, we send another message that the last attack on this retaliation after October was taking down a strategic – tactic air defense very, very far in the south east of Iran, of something that protects one of their refineries, telling them, "Next time this is one." And this time the message was accepted. So, Iran didn't retaliate on this one, but Israel saw in the upcoming month that they're doing many, many, many dangerous things approaching or trying to do unreversible actions on their nuclear program. So, we decided we have to act. And then came the 12-Day War surprise attack.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. Before we go right into the war, I mean, I also want to just underscore for our listeners that Iran has begun to move forward on the nuclear program, warhead development, things that would take it to what CIA director John



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Radcliffe called in football terms, "The one yard line." Where you're literally on the one yard line, you're about ready to score a touchdown. And he pointed out that, no country is on the one yard line and doesn't make the decision to go and score a goal. And the CIA assessment was that Iran had made a decision to move to nuclear weaponization. But the second piece of it, again, and I think it gets lost in the story is, talk a little bit about Iran's ballistic missile capability, their arsenal, their production capability.

NAGEL: I'm planning to, yes.

DUBOWITZ: Because I think that in many ways, in my view, represents an equal threat to Israel. It's not nuclear, it's conventional, but it can do massive damage to this country.

NAGEL: This is exactly what I want to connect, the two mistakes that I mentioned Iran did in 2024 to what we did in 2025. Because for the last 20 years most of the things that Israel did on the, what we call *MABAM*, the War Between the Wars, and other attacks, and cyber, according to foreign press and others about against Iran was mostly against the nuclear program. But they did two mistakes. They supported the terror activities against Israel starting October 7, and supporting Hezbollah and others, Hamas of course. And then they attacked Israel by conventional ballistic missiles and by UAVs, drones and cruise missiles. When we came to the decision of what to do, not only retaliation, but what we have to achieve in the 12-Day War, it was exactly as you said. It was nuclear, but also ballistic missile, mostly the arsenal, the launchers, the production line, and the UAVs, cruise missiles, so all the things that attacked Israel and threatening Israel we have to eliminate.

Now, as you said, we know that this clock, that is not ticking anymore, but it ticked in the Palestine square in Tehran counting the time until 2040, that this is the time that Israel will be not existing anymore according to Khamenei. His plan was to, and I will use your sentence, Mark, if you allow me, "To do a weapon of mass distraction in order to do a weapon of mass destruction." I'm not sure I did the right English word, but it's like to distract the world from what they're doing, allow them in the end to build their weapon of mass destruction. It's meaning eliminating Israel using conventional missiles by having the umbrella of nuclear weapons.

So, the threats and the dangers of the nuclear program is not only the nuclear tips, but it's allowing Iran to use thousands of thousands of PGMs, Precision-Guided Munitions of ballistic missiles and many other kind to attack Israel. So, it's not like so-called disobeying the world order of not using weapons of mass destruction. No, this is a weapon of mass destruction built on huge quantity and capability and accuracy of conventional weapons. So, Israel decided to eat all of these three pillars, ballistic missiles, UAVs and drones, and nuclear. And if you'll see what Israel did in the last, in those 12 days, it's exactly this, this, and this.

DUBOWITZ: There's been a big debate, obviously, about how much damage Israel did to Iran's nuclear program. And different reports coming out from U.S. intelligence agencies, Israeli intelligence agencies. I mean, my view is that the technical debate also overlooks the political strategic calculation. That as long as Donald Trump is President of the United States for the next three and a half years, that Khamenei is taking a huge risk by trying to reconstitute nuclear program when the president has not only made it clear that he'll use military force and has done so, but has said now repeatedly that he'll do so again. So, at the very least we may have bought ourselves three and a half years before Iran would decide to reconstitute its nuclear program and then may need another 12 months, 18 months on the weaponization side. So, it takes us to 2030, maybe to 2031. And Jacob, I think that's an interesting date because 2030, 2031 under the JCPOA.

NAGEL: The JCPOA, exactly.

DUBOWITZ: Right, I mean, the JCPOA in 2030, all of the restrictions on Iran's nuclear program go away. Iran emerges with a huge nuclear program, a huge enrichment capability, but also would have probably gained, according to our



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estimates at FDD, over a trillion dollars in sanctions relief. Which they could then use to fund Hezbollah and Hamas and the Houthis and Iraqi terror proxies, and at that time the Assad regime, and really have a significant nuclear program proxy axis, as well as a massive ballistic missile production capability and inventory. I think Prime Minister Netanyahu, I found what was most interesting about his rationale for a preemptive attack against Islamic Republic in June were the numbers that were released on Iran's ballistic missile production, capability and inventory. And how those numbers would have gone up astronomically over the next few years, where Iran could have had 8,000, 10,000, 12,000, 16,000 ballistic missiles. I mean, that is an existential threat to the State of Israel. So Jacob, where are we today after 12 days of Rising Lion on the ballistic missile inventory and production capability side?

NAGEL: I'll try to stay in the numbers that are allowed to talk about, and it's enough, most of them, maybe all of them were published. But you are right, because we are jumping back and forth from 2015, 2025, 2031, because those that said the JCPOA is okay, they said it gives us at least quiet until 2030, 2031. But then Obama said, Obama, yes, "In 2031 Iran will be a zero seconds from a boom, but." And then Prime Minister Netanyahu stopped him. "That's it. I don't but. You can say but, I hope," he said, "I cannot put my existence of my people on your ops." I hope it'll be everything okay. They'll understand that it's good for the economy. But they continue, as you said, the JCPOA would, maybe they'll not run for Obama until 2030. I don't think so, but maybe, let's assume.

For them it's a second, 2031 being with an industrial size enrichment, all the advanced centrifuges allowed everything in, very advanced on the weaponization, assuming they're not building a warhead. And then what? And now we for sure now in 2031 we're in a much better situation. Yes, there was needed a war to do it. Now, if I go to numbers, and you're totally right that those numbers pushed Prime Minister Netanyahu and the cabinet to decide on the attack together with the United States. Look, we expected, expected according to their capabilities, to send on Israel few hundred, few hundred, this is my – few hundred ballistic missiles a day. This was their capability if we would do nothing, if we would not do the preemptive strike, if we would not start. If they would start, and even after we started we said they'll have enough. Now, they had for the first day 100, but then it decreases, decreases, decreases. I think the biggest day was 100, maybe 110.

DUBOWITZ: So, you're saying they would have the capability–

NAGEL: They had even the 400.

DUBOWITZ: 400 a day.

NAGEL: Now, I heard, and again, it's not an official, but I heard a goal that we want to decimate them on almost every capability of the ballistic, of the nuclear more, but on the ballistic and the drone to decimate them to one-tenth of what they had. Now, if you ask me what is their capability today, so comparing to this few hundred, four, five hundred, I think today their capability is two-tenths. If we won't do nothing in very small-time because you are right for the nuclear that maybe they will wait for Trump, but for the ballistic, if they're going to be new things, yes, Trump told them, "Look, don't test us." And he said, "Take our terms or suffer the consequences." He mostly meant the nuclear, but I hope you'll mean it in the future also for the ballistic missiles.

I think that they are around one-tenth in some places. Some places much, much, much less. Now, for example, take the launchers. People are saying, always asking us, "How many launchers were eliminated? How many?" Because remember, they had more than 1,000, 2,000 ballistic missiles, even more, but they have few hundreds launchers. Now, believe me, more than 50% of their launchers were eliminated. Some of them destroyed. Some of them blocked, meaning you cannot reach them. Some of them, yes, in the future they'll open the entrance for some tunnels, maybe they'll come.

And missiles, I don't want to go numbers, because it depends on what kind of missiles, but a huge amount of their missiles were destroyed. But we have to remember, at the total, okay, 500 and something, 530, 40, 50. This is the number



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I don't want to go into details, but were fired Israel. That's it. Remember what I told you, we thought it'll be a few hundred a day.

What they did during the whole 12 days was around the number that we thought they'll do for a day. And out of this one, only about 10% hit Israel, and 10% of this 10% really made damage. And I'm not underestimating, some of them did real, serious damage. Something about eight, 10 missiles did very big damage to places in Israel. Still, just how many people died? 29. How many people will anticipated will die? Believe me, when we started, the number was much more if we would not do a preemptive strike. Now, what we did in the preemptive strike, we just cleared the skies, and it was really, if you would ask me, I would say no way it will happened.

It was just we have to take our hat to the people of the intelligence and the air force. Our jets were flying freely above Tehran. Our UAVs were there all the time looking for threats to Israel. We did what we needed to do above Tehran. It's amazing. It's 2,000 kilometers from Israel and you operated it like it Israel. So, I'll go back to the 10% estimation. If we are doing today operations in Syria or others, it's, you know, 200 kilometers, 100 kilometers. We did it in 2,000 kilometers, again, 10, count it, divide it to 10 or divide it to 20. The same equation. So, we succeeded.

Now, I'll give you another number that went out. But again, until you count it you don't understand what is meaning. I was long time ago, when I was young and pretty, I was in one of my committees, not the head of the committee, and we said, "How many hours of intelligence we can get from UAVs?" And the number was that, well, the maximum that one time will come it, because 1,000, maybe. I'm talking about many, many years ago, Israel did in the 12 days. I'm not talking about the world or the war, and I'm not counting Gaza. The Iran War Israel did around 20,000 flying hours of all the platforms together. And of course, I cannot tell you the numbers exactly which one, which UAVs. It's fighters, it's refuelers, it's everything. 20,000.

Believe me, go to the Wikipedia or internet and try to see if there is any service that did this amount of flying hours in a war. Maybe you'll find, of course, the American Air Force doing it maybe, I don't know where, but 20,000 hours in 12 days. What I told you before, someone said that we have 1,000 hours a year. So just to imagine the numbers. And of course, if I will start counting the number of ammunitions that we throw in Iran during these 12 days. Again, I can cannot go into detail numbers, but believe a few thousand, few thousand of PGMs [Precision-guided munition] were used during this 12 days for many, many, many varieties. Some Americans, some Israelis, some more accurate, some less accurate. Those are the numbers that Israel just did above Iran, what they wanted to do, and it was against nuclear. And of course, then President Trump joined with the strategic bombers giving them ops.

It was against the remaining production facilities within 2024 of the missiles, ballistic missiles, the drones, and some of their so-called R&D, research and development facilities for all nuclear, everything. Everything was attacked. Now, ask me if everything in Iran was destroyed? No. Israel, for example, decided. You saw we didn't touch, people say it was a mistake. People say, no, I'm not sure we'll go into it. We didn't touch the economy, the core economy of Iran. We didn't touch the energy sector, we didn't touch the – of course, we touched the government because on the preemptive strike we took all tier one, tier two in air force, intelligence. And of course, we eliminated – again, let's not argue about the numbers, but everyone agree that 14, the top 14 scientists of the nuclear program were eliminated.

I don't know. People, again, are doubting this one. If you take 14 leading engineers on a program, believe me, just go back to the Manhattan Program and I'll give you 14 names that if someone would eliminate, the US were not coming. Not in those times that they came to a nuclear bomb. So it's very, very, very significant number that Israel did during this 12 days.



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DUBOWITZ: Okay. So extraordinary accomplishment by the United States and Israel during the 12-Day War. Certainly before that, we haven't talked about it, but I think you alluded to that. I mean, Israel's accomplishments against Hezbollah, in eliminating the Hezbollah missile threat, which Iran had always built Hezbollah.

NAGEL: Again, not totally eliminating, but huge, huge, huge degradation of it. Some people said two-thirds of it. Let's stand with two-thirds without going into details.

DUBOWITZ: Right. And that was always an Israeli concern that a strike against the Islamic Republic's nuclear and ballistic missile programs would precipitate a strike by Hezbollah against Israel with thousands of precision guided munitions raining down on Tel Aviv and causing massive casualties. Israel through airstrikes and the famous beeper operation did severe damage to Hezbollah, maybe taking it off the board, at least for then and maybe for a long time, the Hezbollah threat. Okay, so extraordinary capabilities. Your career intersects with everything that was at play, right? The air defenses—

NAGEL: Not everything, but—

DUBOWITZ: Many things.

NAGEL: Many things.

DUBOWITZ: The air defenses that were protecting Israeli civilians, the platforms, the U.S. platforms that had been provided by the United States to Israel funded through the Memorandum of Understanding, the \$38 billion that you had helped where you had negotiated. All the work that you had done on military R&D programs. I'm sure a number of them were at use during the 12-Day War. And all of this, your opposition to the 2015 JCPOA, in appreciation that Israel was much better off, the United States was much better off of having President Trump withdraw from that agreement in 2018, use military force against Iran's nuclear program. Set it back significantly and make sure that we were not in this terrible situation come 2030, 2031, when Iran would be able to have a massive program, huge capabilities, a trillion dollars in cash. Okay, that's the good news.

The bad news is the only place where the Islamic Republic seems to beat us, us being the United States, and certainly the Europeans. Unfortunately, you, Israelis, are not at the table, is at the negotiating table where every time—

NAGEL: I'm not in the battlefield, it's in the table.

DUBOWITZ: It's not in the battlefield, it's on the negotiating table. And every time we end up at the table with the regime, we get out negotiated. We got out, negotiated in 2013, we got out negotiated in 2015. Biden tried to negotiate during his term, and the Iranians actually pretty much refused to negotiate in any serious way, massively escalated their nuclear program. They didn't fear any kind of force from Biden. And then came in and we did a dance with him in Oman under the Trump administration, where I actually think the Iranians were poised to win that negotiation too. But were too foolish and arrogant enough to have not realized that they could have gotten a pretty good deal from the Trump administration and instead said no, and that led ultimately to the American green light and the Israeli strikes and the American bombing of the facilities.

Okay, I'm afraid, Jacob, that we're going back to the negotiating table and that once again, Iran is going to out negotiate us. And they're going to play for time. And while they're playing for time, they're going to work with China, Russia, North Korea, others, they're going to rebuild their ballistic missile production capability, their air defenses. They will use sanctions evasion to keep their economy afloat by selling oil to the Chinese, shadow banking in order to evade our restrictions. And play us for fools once again at the negotiating table. We'll see what happens with snapback, but the defer snapback and use the Chinese and Russians to do that. And try and coax us into another bad deal. Do you share my



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concerns? And if so, what should the United States and Israel be doing in order to ensure that we don't end up in another fatally flawed agreement with the Islamic Republic?

NAGEL: Look, you exactly just brought up the thing that if you ask me what is keeping me awake at night, this is one. Why? Because we are very bad at PR, Israel especially. And we are very bad in negotiating. We think we are the smartest, but believe me, some people say that the Iranians invented chess. They are thinking sometimes when you agree to go with them to a negotiating table, usually they're better than you. Why? Because they are not shy of asking crazy things, and sometimes the negotiating team of the other side is getting order from home, don't come back without an agreement. This is what happened in 2015. I talked with people, I said, "We cannot go home without—"

DUBOWITZ: You're talking about the U.S. negotiators?

NAGEL: U.S. negotiators. They said, "There's only one thing that we should bring. Take Iran for one year off from breakout. If you achieve this, all the others, I don't care." This was Obama. If you don't have one year from breakout to a fissile material, not the bomb, then come back, it's a good agreement. Now you are right. So this is why this podcast is a very timely one, because on the table now, and again, I'm not sure when it'll go out, but snapback, not snapback. We are coming to the decision moment. As of now, looks like maybe there will be snapback. I don't know because China, Russia are not giving up. The Europeans, every time when you spit in their face like in 2010, they say, "Wow, we love rain." And it just happened in the last few days. And I am going back on what I said before, and you mentioned that Trump and the Iranians in a very, very short time, they complete five rounds.

What if, I hope not, but if there will be another round? Now everyone have to understand, as we wrote together, this is not the sixth round of the negotiations from before the war. This is the first round of new rules. As President Trump said, "What was on the table before does not exist anymore. You Iranians didn't take it. There was a war. We are now in a different situation." Now there is only one way to look on those negotiations. If that will happen and I don't think we have to go to these negotiations unless the Iranians are willing to total surrender. And believe me, we know the Iranians, they're not going to have a total surrender.

DUBOWITZ: Sir, let's just be clear on what total surrender means. Total surrender means no enrichment.

NAGEL: No enrichment.

DUBOWITZ: No reprocessing.

NAGEL: No reprocessing, no heavy water, no weaponization, no ballistic missiles, no support terror. And I can say no, no. Remember Israel, we always was, people told us that no, no bear. It was the zero, zero, zero. This was enrichment, heavy water, and fissile materials. So no uranium, no plutonium, and no all these raw materials, but there are another 40 noes if you go into many, many details. It's no, no, no, no. And now, we add to it "no ballistic missiles and no supporting for terror because the mistakes of the Iranian state." Look, now what I wrote and then you joined me. I am much more tough than saying this should be the end result of the negotiations between, because there's not going to be negotiations between Israel and Iran. If there will be, it'll be negotiations between US and Iran or US plus the Europeans and Iran.

What you said now is not what I see as the end result of the negotiations. I see it as the prerequisite to start the negotiations, meaning you Iran want to go to the table, you want to take out our sweats off the table? Okay, it's okay. We are willing to talk to you before the beginning of the negotiations, total dismantlement of all the facilities, total dismantlement of all the capabilities that you have. This is the prerequisite. I cannot say total dismantlement of your nuclear warheads because they don't have nuclear warheads, but they have a beginning of, they have capabilities, they have labs, they have other things. Some of the things we dismantled like the edge of the scientists.



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But a very simple thing is, yes, Fordow is under rubble, and Isfahan is under rubble, and Natanz is, you know, there are rubble, there are not facilities. So don't try to put a digger inside and try to come to your 408 kilo and reach uranium for 6% maybe there. Or don't try to come back to some of your equipment there. Just cover everything with mud, dirt, I don't know or put some explosives and bomb everything. This is for total dismantlement.

DUBOWITZ: Well, it's likely not going to happen. But when one thinks about it, this is not a harsh demand. I mean, what we're saying to the regime in Iran is, look, if you want a civilian nuclear program, there are 23 countries in the world that have civilian nuclear programs. They buy their fuel rods from abroad to power their electricity. Those 23 countries, by the way, are American allies. You, Iran, have spent maybe a half a trillion dollars in direct and indirect costs to build a nuclear program that was never designed for civilian energy. By the way, your electrical grid is a disaster. You can't keep the lights on in your country. There're rolling blackouts every day. If you had spent that money on water infrastructure, maybe your people would have water to drink, but they don't have water to drink. We know we've seen what's happening this summer with literally Iran is running out of fresh water for their people.

NAGEL: And the water are contaminated.

DUBOWITZ: Their lakes have dried up. Their economy is a disaster. I mean, Iran is in a position today, the Islamic Republic, where if they were just willing to compromise and say, we don't want nuclear weapons. We don't need ballistic missiles to fire at Israel, or U.S. forces, or America's Gulf allies. We want to be a normal country. Let's sit down with the United States. And as President Trump would say, "I'll show you how to make Iran great again." And we're talking about a normal country with investments and opportunity for its people. And this is what I want to get to in the last 10 minutes of our podcast, you and I know the supreme leader, Khamenei, will never agree to that. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard will never agree to that. They are obsessed with the destruction of Israel. They're obsessed with kicking America out of the Middle East so that they can enable their Messianic desires to destroy Israel.

The Islamic Republic remains in the minds of Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards. It's a revolutionary regime that has caused significant death and destruction in this region. And so, I want to get to this last part of what the real objective should be. Let's talk about toppling the Islamic Republic, getting rid of this regime. What do you think of that? How's Israel's thinking changed on that question in recent years, particularly since October 7th, since the 12-Day War, is there now a recognition in your political security, intelligence, defense establishment that getting rid of the regime in Iran is really the only way to solve this to bring peace, not just for Iranians, but for the whole region?

NAGEL: If I was a real Jew, I am a real Jew always, and you ask a real Jew a question, it's answered by question. So I would ask if you think that the American administration is willing to talk about toppling or weakening the Iranian regime? But I want to challenge you now, maybe you'll come back to it in the end because you are the interviewer. I have to give the answer, you are asking the questions. But before I'm totally going to answer your question, I want to have a connect line between what we talked until now and this part, because as you mentioned, I was leading the Israeli national defense and strategic and next 10 years or next decade force buildup and budget and other things. And yes, about one-third of the top money that we recommended to add was to make sure that we're ready for the next Iran war, and it was before the 12-Days War. So, some people are, stupid people, are coming and say, "Eh, there was a war? Wow. I just heard a great podcast between Mark Dubowitz and Jacob Nagel of all those great achievements of Israel. So, you don't need."

And I'm sure that when we come to negotiate the next MOU, because the old one is almost done and we have to start negotiating the new one that will start in a year or two, they'll say, "Look, you don't have an enemy. Iran is on its knees. Hezbollah was beaten. Hamas is almost going to be beaten. We can take the money and move it to..." I'm talking about Israel now, "education, science," I don't know, "health and other things."



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DUBOWITZ: How about transportation?

NAGEL: And transportation.

DUBOWITZ: Given the traffic.

(LAUGHTER)

NAGEL: Even we put all the billions in transportation, it won't work, but this is another problem of Israel. I'm sure it deserves a separate podcast, not on "Iran Breakdown" and not with so poor expert on transportation, like me. If there is a traffic light, I'll go into it. But I'm saying that people that are saying so are totally, totally, totally wrong because Iran suffered a lot. Iran was beaten. But you know what is the most dangerous animal in the jungle?

DUBOWITZ: A wounded one.

NAGEL: It's a wounded one, and Iran is a very wounded one. So, they're looking to reconstruct, to rebuild, but they're looking to revenge and to come back at Israel. So, we cannot say, especially after October 7, in a place like Israel. So, this brings me exactly to the answer of your question, and we talked about it many, many times. I think you taught me this one in the beginning when I was always concentrated in hurting the nuclear program, doing some covert mission or operation and others.

But we looked in history and if a country really wants a nuclear program, you can only halt them, you can delay them one year. Then this is what Israel is doing for the last 20, 25 years. And before the last war, we came to the point that you mentioned the CIA director and others, they were on the one-yard line. I know there will be argument. It was some people will say on the half yard, some people say they were on the third yard. Never mind. For sure, it was less than 10 yards. So, in one touchdown, they're in. And after touchdown, you know they score the points.

And the only way to really stop a country is, yes, you have to deal with the nuclear and ballistic and drones. You have to deal with all enrichment and uranium, plutonium, heavy water. Maybe some of our audience are tired from hearing all those technical terms, but there's only one way to make sure, definitely make sure, of course with some question mark will come instead. But the only way to stop totally a nuclear program of a country that want a nuclear program is make this country not wanting it.

So, you can talk like President Trump, "Look, I'll make Iran greater again. I will make you Switzerland of the Middle East." Yes, meaning convincing them they don't want it. I know them. I know how they're thinking and still probably, I don't know, but maybe better than others. No way. They're not going to be convinced, this regime. So, you have to do something to change it.

Now, I'm going to be politically correct. We are a democratic country. I was just interviewed last week on the radio, "Do you think we were supposed to kill Khamenei?" Good enough for me I'm not in the decision-making seat, but I told him at the end, "If I was in the decision-making seat, no. I don't know who will come instead. And Khamenei is not the regime because killing Khamenei, not killing the regime. I don't know."

Changing the regime is something that you cannot put as a goal and Israel didn't have, and I hope it won't have, as one of its goals, changing the regime. Toppling, I don't know what is the meaning of toppling. I call it weakening the regime. I know what is the meaning of toppling, but I'm not sure where it is in between changing the regime or making some... I want someone else to tear down the regime. Who? The people of Iran that are suffering from this regime. The people of Iran that don't have water.



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And I wish this podcast will be translated to Farsi and will air in Tehran. I'm sure it'll have more viewers in Tehran. Even so, you and me are not pretty like the ladies that are playing in Tehran, Liraz Charhi and other actor. But I want the Iranian people to understand and we have to help them. Now, I want to try to escape from your direct question.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah, so far you are escaping.

NAGEL: No, now I'm coming to, I was around.

DUBOWITZ: Here's my direct—

NAGEL: The Israeli, the regime, I want answer you a direct one, but I'm telling you that if I was now the one that have to take the decisions, I'll say, you have to change and we have to enlarge and you have to start work on things like weakening the regime, helping the opposition. And I wrote about it and there are – I'm not as expert – in some of the FDD experts that wrote papers of, I don't know, maybe hundreds of actions that you can do in order to help the opposition in Iran. But in one of my papers, I mentioned four or five, six things that we can do to help the opposition. To give them intelligence, to give them weapons. I'm not send them F-15s, but they are fighting with stones and sticks against the Basij that is killing them with machine guns. Give them guns, small guns, rifles. Give them something. Give them intelligence where the Basij is sleeping. Give them intelligence where the Basij is going, the routes. Give them some other economy.

Sometimes you can pay \$200 per person there. Wow, for them, it'll be a huge change and maybe they'll so-called join the army of the opposition, takeover or the French Revolution. So, it'll be the Iran Revolution. There are many, many ways of doing it. Soft ways, hard ways, in-between ways, influential ways, hundreds of ways of doing it. Then ask me, how come it's not happening until now? You watch, it's happening a little bit. I think some of it is underneath. I'm not the prime minister. I'm not the head of IDF. I'm not the head of Mossad, fortunately enough. My wife would kill me if I do it, but I think they know what I just said.

They have to decide. If you ask me if there already a decision to have the money transferred from PGMs to influence or toppling the regime? No, let's have the PGMs also, even more than. But I think that we have to think about other ways in this ladder of points and talking points or actions that are leading towards Iran will stop working on a nuclear program. There are many ways, soft, hard. FDD is working on all of them, as I understand. I wish Israel also work on some of those that you just mentioned.

DUBOWITZ: Yeah. I know it's sensitive for you, but my sense is Israel has really turned the corner on this question in recent years and has really committed itself, both in terms of doctrine and resources to thinking of ways to support the opposition to fracture the support base of the regime. Precision-guided munitions is what you're talking about. It's essential that Israel has more PGMs in order to do damage to Islamic Republic's core capabilities, also defend against PGMs that have been fired at Israeli civilians, but PGM as well, in terms of popular group mobilization, call that a PGM.

How do you actually mobilize Iranians on the streets? How do you give them labor strike funds, communication devices? How do you arm them in some way, whether it's through weapons or through other means? How to use intelligence and cyber against the Basij and against the internal repression apparatus of the regime?

And I think it's also worth noting, Jacob, we haven't talked about it, but in the last few days of the 12-Day War, Israel was deliberately striking the apparatus of the regime responsible not only for external aggression, but for internal repression and a number of the people that were taken out—

NAGEL: And supporting terror. This is why before we finish, we have to connect what we talked for an hour to what is going on now in Israel and Gaza. Because one of the big changes that Israel did in its national security strategy, we are exercising it now in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza, and of course, we did in Iran. That many, many years, Israel's main two



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words were containment and defense. We moved from containment and defense to offense and prevention. This is preempting strike. We wrote about it. Unfortunately, August 2023, Israel have to change this tactic, this doctrine in the north. It didn't happen. Preemptive strike. It happened now in Iran, but it's going to effect.

Everyone is looking what Israel is doing in Iran or in Gaza, and it's connected. It's not the same. But this triangle, Gaza, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Houthis, Iraq, Jordan, all of its together is affecting, because we are in the Middle East. We're a villa in the jungle, everyone want the villa. We have to make sure that they all stay in the jungle.

DUBOWITZ: Okay. Jacob, with that, thank you very much. Again, a pleasure. Thank you for everything you've done for the U.S.-Israel relationship, everything you've done over your career to defend, really, Western civilization from the radical Islamists in Tehran and their proxies throughout the region. And I can promise you that this will be broadcast inside Iran and I hope one day Iranian people, when they're free, will remember you and—

NAGEL: What do you mean?

DUBOWITZ: Name a street after you.

NAGEL: I'm waiting for them to call you and me and give us the Medal of Honor of Iran.

DUBOWITZ: Well, I think the Medal of Honor will ultimately go to the Iranian people, but thank you for everything you've done and looking forward to having you back.

NAGEL: Thank you very much.

DUBOWITZ: After spending decades shaping Israel's defense and security strategy, Jacob reminded us today of something simple but profound: The Islamic Republic's nuclear and ballistic missile programs are not bargaining chips. It is the regime's insurance policy for its survival, its shield for terror abroad, and its weapon against its own people.

The regime in Iran is dedicated to the destruction of Israel. It's dedicated to a Middle East without America. It is dedicated to death to America. That's why the only acceptable outcome with this regime is complete and utter dismantlement. No delay, no suspension. Dismantlement. Anything less emboldens Tehran and endangers both the United States and Israel.

The regime believes time is on its side. The question is whether Washington and its allies will finally prove them wrong. Because buying time isn't enough. The mission is to end the Islamic Republic's nuclear blackmail once and for all – and to end the Islamic Republic once and for all.

I'm your host, Mark Dubowitz. This has been "The Iran Breakdown." Until next time when we break it down all again.