

RURAL BROADBAND INSIGHTS FOR CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



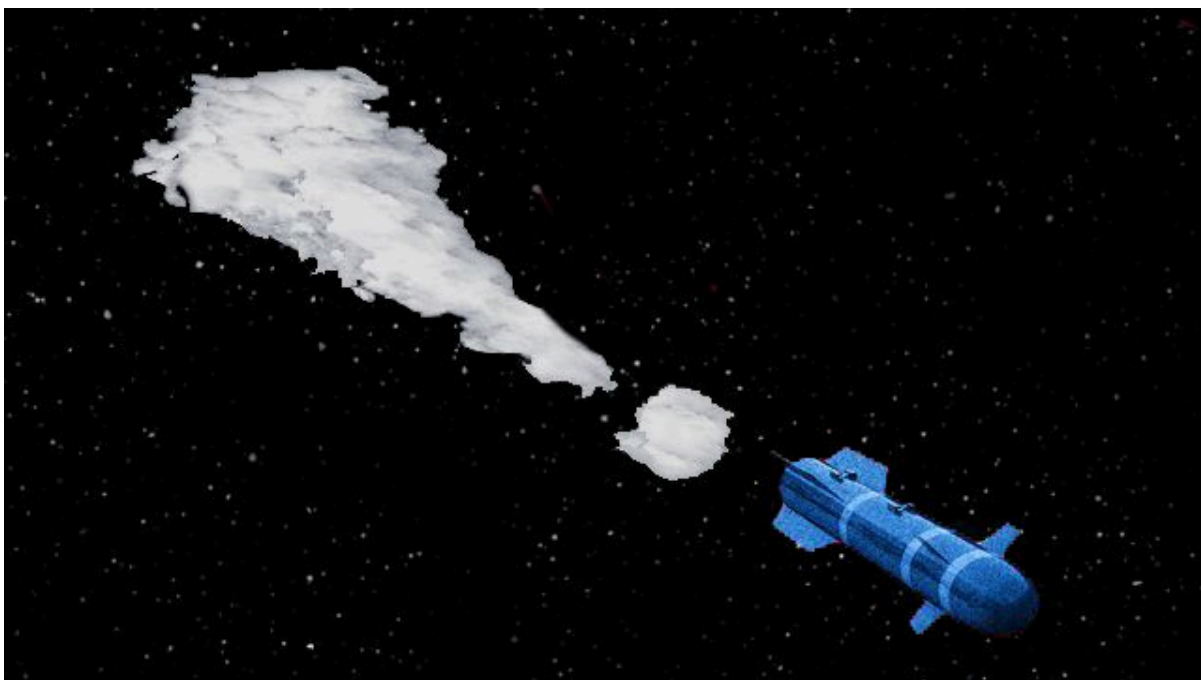
WITH PARTNER JONATHAN CHAMBERS

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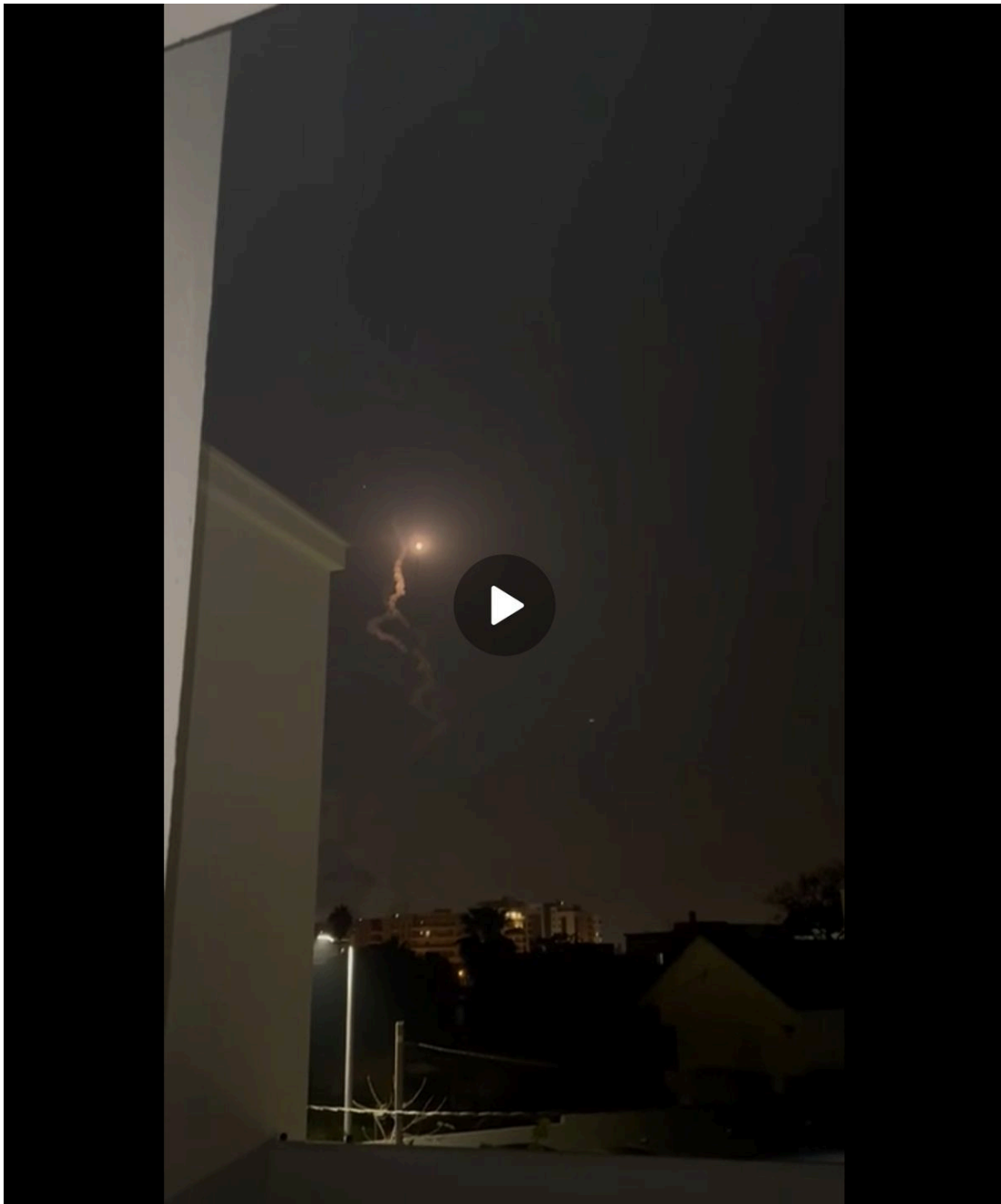
By Jonathan Chambers • Apr 19, 2024

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Star Wars



Below is a screenshot and link to a video that an Israeli friend of mine sent me last Saturday night, with the comment: **“Like Star Wars. It’s scary.”**



My friend's home is a short walk from the cemetery where my wife is buried, which I visited last month.

Of the 350 drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles fired by Iran at Israel last weekend, 99% were intercepted, and the only reported casualty was a young Bedouin girl.

What impressed me about the missile defense systems used by Israel, the U.S., and our regional allies was the ability to intercept ballistic missiles.

- According to the Pentagon and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), 120 ballistic missiles were destroyed in flight, most by exo-atmospheric interception.

Lessons From History



When I was a young staffer on Capitol Hill, advising senators on national security policy, the Reagan Administration was pursuing its Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) (which was derisively called “Star Wars” at the time).

The main criticisms of SDI were:

1. It would be too expensive.
2. It would be a near technological impossibility to intercept ballistic missiles in flight, especially in large numbers.
3. A missile defense system would destabilize the nuclear deterrence regime of Mutually Assured Destruction.

Opposition to the development of ballistic missile defense systems came from almost every quarter – scientists, politicians, think tanks, academics. The opposition was vocal and sustained. The initial research and development required billions in funding from Congress.

While I worked on Capitol Hill, I was able to attend briefings at the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies.

I recall vividly a meeting I had with Edward Teller, the father of the hydrogen bomb. (If you watched “Oppenheimer,” Teller was the one pressing the other scientists to develop a hydrogen bomb. He also was opposed to Oppenheimer keeping his security clearance.) By the 1980s, Teller had become a strong proponent of a ballistic missile defense system. He believed in the science of it.

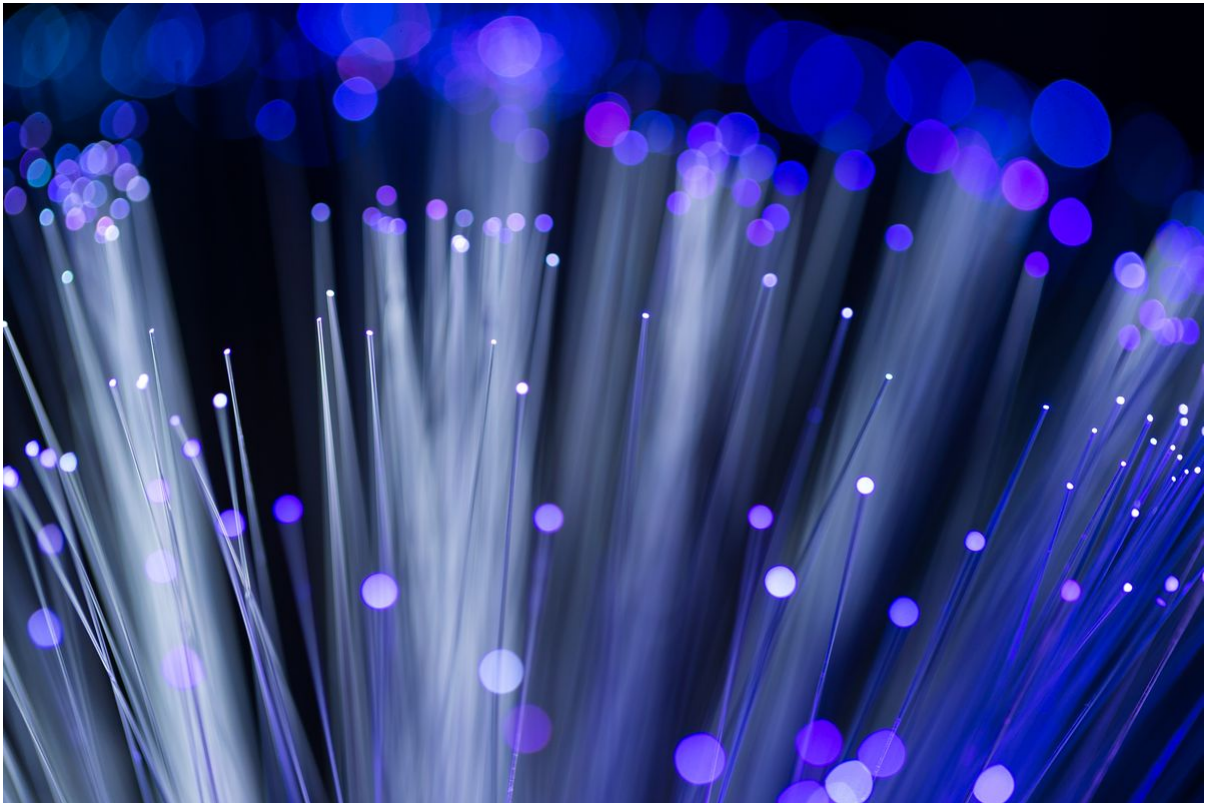
Why it matters:

- Obviously, President Reagan’s goal of making nuclear weapons obsolete has not come to pass.
- The drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles fired by Iran were not carrying nuclear warheads, a capability Iran has been pursuing for years.
- Israel also possesses nuclear weapons, but that doesn’t stop its neighbors from raining down missiles upon Israel.

The bottom line:

The missile defense system has not only succeeded in its purpose, it’s also now vital to Israel’s security.

The Big Picture



Iran's attack last weekend could have been devastating in lives lost.

In addition to taking lives, the missiles could have damaged the Old City of Jerusalem. Among the places in the path of missiles were:

- The Church of the Holy Sepulchre (where Jesus died, was buried, and rose)
- The Al Aqsa Mosque (from where the Prophet Muhammad descended to Heaven)
- The Temple Mount, which includes the Foundation Stone (the place where Abrahamic religions believe the world was created)

Earlier this week, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries wrote his colleagues to urge them to support a national security funding package to assist Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan, stating:

“It is imperative that Hamas, a brutal terrorist organization funded by Iran, be decisively defeated... The world is an increasingly dangerous place and we must continue to stand with our democratic allies in Ukraine and across the globe... Putin’s

Russia, aided by Iranian weapons systems, has made deeply troubling gains in recent weeks...”

The Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson, announced that he will put these national security funding measures up for a vote this weekend.

- In doing so, he knows his tenure as Speaker is being threatened by several Congressional members in his party.
- While there are Democrats who oppose aid to Israel, and Republicans who oppose aid to Ukraine, majorities of both parties support the national security funding package.

But the House has grown dysfunctional.

I have not advised anyone on national security for decades. Those of us who worked in that field decades ago got several of the big questions right. We understood that U.S. actions in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, the Americas, and Africa were all *of a piece*.

The same is true today. The conflicts in Ukraine and Israel are of a piece.

- Iran funds terrorist organizations in the Middle East, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis. Iran has been attacking the U.S. and Israel by these proxies.
- Iran has also been supplying missiles to Russia, which it has been using to attack Ukrainian cities for the past two years. Ukraine does not have Israel’s missile defense system, nor U.S. military support. And it is running out of anti-aircraft artillery.

The final word:

Our missile defense systems demonstrated last weekend that technological prowess continues to be unmatched. Our will, however, is openly questioned by our adversaries.

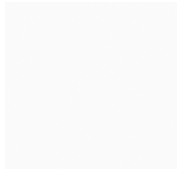
I pray for our country that Mike Johnson and Hakeem Jeffries recognize this weekend, and in the weeks to come, that they have more in common

as America's leaders than the differences they may have as leaders of their respective parties.

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