

Arsonists in the White House

I made it a point not to go to sleep last night, knowing what was coming from Iran.

After Shabbat with my son's pre-army program, we heard news of the instructions from Israel's Homefront Command that for the next two days all schools would be closed, there were to be no gatherings of more than 1,000 people, Israel's airport and airspace would be closed and more.

To be honest, I went into Shabbat—the day of rest—very nervous that something would happen, that we were near the airport, which for sure is a major target and that we would be far from home and our family (except for our youngest son, who will be going into the army this summer).

Before we knew that Iran had launched hundreds of drones and missiles, things were already tense. Then when we realized what was happening, what was heading our way, people got even more nervous. I didn't fear as much for myself, but the waiting felt like waiting for an execution to take place. Maybe there's a better analogy, but that's the best one I have on three hours sleep.

Of course, the source of the terrorist attack and broader threat is in Iran. However, I feel like there's schizophrenia in the White House that is enabling the Islamic regime to act as aggressively as it is.

There's no question in my mind that President Biden does not want an all-out regional war and perhaps genuinely does care about Israel's safety. I am grateful for that and the U.S. (and others) participating in intelligence and shooting down some incoming Iranian missiles and drones before they arrived in Israeli air space. But I am no less sure that the Biden administration is acting the way it is because it does not want a regional escalation, albeit what it is doing makes that

more probable.

But it feels as though the Biden administration is behaving like an arsonist trying to put out a fire that it is pretending it didn't set. In November, the administration released \$10 billion to Iran, providing much-needed funds to pay for its domestic and global terrorist infrastructure, weapons, incitement and racing toward a nuclear weapon. (Parenthetically, anyone who thinks a nuclear Iran won't use such a weapon after last night is foolish.)

The administration has "threatened" Iran with tough words such as "don't" and that its support for Israel is "ironclad." But its actions on top of funding the Islamic regime by enabling a U.N. resolution against Israel, threatening to withhold weapons and offering other public displays of friction tell a different story.

In addition to Iran and its proxies in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen closely observing how much they can get away with, the rest of the Arab world is doing the same. The Arab world considers Iran no less of a threat and some are even indirectly allied with Israel. They are assessing how reliable the U.S. truly is.

Looking at a statement Biden made, there is indeed a lot to worry about. While Biden did "condemn these attacks in the strongest possible terms" in the official White House statement, what he condemned most strongly was "an unprecedented air attack against military facilities in Israel." I guess the president must have been snoozing when I was jolted out of bed and sent to a bomb shelter due to an attack on my community and hundreds of other communities, from large cities to small towns—most certainly not "military facilities."

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Amid the missiles exploding, one could hear a chuckle from Tehran at Biden's absurd lie.

Biden also reportedly told Prime Minister Netanyahu that the United States would neither participate in nor support offensive actions against Iran. The message became public.

Unfortunately, these are exactly the wrong messages to an ally that has just been brazenly attacked, sending a message of weakness to the Islamic regime and its terrorist proxies, and putting Israel, the Middle East and the rest of the world at even greater risk.

When I see such duplicity or, at best, confusion, I recognize it as a sign of weakness towards Iran and its terrorist proxies. Iran's attack was a military failure. Yes, the U.S. and others played an important role in that outcome, for which I am neither disregarding nor ungrateful. However, when these same countries and leaders warn Israel against responding in a way that escalates the situation, I understand that the Iranian Islamic regime and its terrorist proxies see an opportunity. They have calculated that they can launch hundreds of drones and ballistic missiles and get away with it.

In calculating its own response, balanced with the pressure from the U.S. and others, Israel needs to consider whether if others had been attacked like this, would they respond harshly, or would they roll over? Israel needs to calculate whether, even with the successful air defense system it has built and now demonstrated, these defensive weapons are meant to keep Israelis safe or to make firing missiles and drones at Israel acceptable?

The U.S. and others cannot on one hand issue soft verbal threats—as Biden did with his “don't” and “ironclad” comments—and yet enable the terror by providing billions of dollars, voting against Israel in the U.N. or pretending that

the Iranian Islamic regime don't really mean what it is threatening. Or that Iran be rationalized and reasoned with.

Looking ahead, the Biden administration needs to back down from its weakness and show some backbone. Biden would do well to remember that the Islamic regime only refers to Israel as the "Little Satan," and the U.S. is the "Big Satan." When its leaders goad Iranian children to chant "Death to America," and "Death to Israel," it's not because it's a nice rhyme in Farsi or part of a geography class but because they mean it.

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Standing strong against the Iranian regime and its proxies is the way to bring peace, unite moderate Arab states in an alliance with Israel, and protect the world. Iranians need external support to take to the streets and end the 45-year tyrannical Islamic regime.

Failure to stand up to Islamic terrorists emboldens and empowers them. It could invite an aggressive, even military, response from Turkey, NATO's Islamist member, which threatens us all.

As the Iranian foreign ministry posted after the attack was underway, this is just the first round. They are prepared to do more, but Israel is prepared for that occasion. While Israel's air defense boasted a remarkable 99% effectiveness rate and few missiles actually landed in Israel, we must remember this defense was against only hundreds of missiles and drones. Among other international failures, the U.N. has enabled Hezbollah to amass between 150,000 and 350,000 rockets, missiles and other weapons capable of hitting all of Israel. Estimates suggest they can launch 10 times or more in one day what Iran just launched, potentially overwhelming even the best air defense systems.

This afternoon, I dropped off something for my son and daughter-in-law. My 3-year-old grandson was on the couch “reading” a book. When I sat next to him he said “Saba (grandpa), last night we had a siren and I cried.”

“Why did you cry?” I asked.

“Because I was scared.”

So I told him, “Abba (Dad), Saba and Savta (Grandma) had a siren too,” and then he went back to his book, as if everything were normal. He’s young enough that he may forget this, but if it escalates, perhaps not. Then again, I feel better about dealing with the threat now, even with the trauma, rather than kicking the can down the road for his generation—if we can even wait that long.

The time is now for the U.S. administration to act with fortitude and moral clarity. Failure to do so will be a disaster and lead to the inevitable escalation that it says it doesn’t want anyway.{eo}

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