Israel, Iran, and the Future of the Iranian Nuclear Deal: A Conversation with Ron Dermer, Israel’s Ambassador to the United States

TRANSCRIPT

Discussion

- Ron Dermer, Israel’s Ambassador to the United States
- Michael Doran, Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute

Please note: This transcript is based off a recording and mistranslations may appear in text. The names of participants in the Audience Q&A have been removed. A video of the event is available: https://www.hudson.org/events/1559-israel-iran-and-the-future-of-the-iranian-nuclear-deal-a-conversation-with-ron-dermer-israel-s-ambassador-to-the-united-states-52018
MICHAEL DORAN: I'm Mike Doran. I'm a senior fellow at Hudson. And I welcome you to this morning's conversation with the Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer. I'm sure you're all familiar with his bio. But I'll nonetheless run through the high points. He was born and raised in Miami Beach. And then he has a degree in finance from...

RON DERMER: It's the other Promised Land.

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: …From the Wharton School. Yeah, you could be working in finance in New York, or you could be sitting on a beach in Miami. Instead, you chose this. You coauthored the book, in 2004 with Natan Sharansky, "The Case for Democracy," which was translated – I'm very jealous – into 10 languages. I've written two books. Neither one of them has been translated.

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: From 2009 to 2013, he was a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. And he's rumored to be one of the prime minister's closest confidants. So we're hoping to get all the secrets this morning.

DERMER: Absolutely. I was waiting for this moment to reveal everything.

DORAN: Well, welcome.

DERMER: Thank you. Thank you.

DORAN: We're very honored to have you. Yes, so let's start with that because I think you owe it to Hudson Institute the secrets of the operation that stole the archive out of Tehran.

DERMER: It's very tempting.

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: I'm going to have to pass on that. But it is a great intelligence coup for Israel's Mossad, one of the greatest in the history of our country. There's been a few things like Osirak and Entebbe that sort of resound decades later. So I think that's one of those cases. And I guess, you know, someone will make a movie about it in 50 years or so. And then you can invite me back to Hudson to go over all the details. But what the prime minister showed last Monday, about ten days ago, was an amazing, remarkable trove of information. You may have seen that some people immediately after the prime minister presented it said there was nothing new here.

DORAN: I think that started before he even finished.

DERMER: Yes.

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: It actually did start before he was finished. And anyone who says it actually does not know what they're talking about, or has an agenda, or both. Because there was a lot new, unless they have their own private intelligence agencies that's finer than the U.S. intelligence agency or the Israeli intelligence agency or any intelligence agency around the world. It is true that we knew – and serious governments around the world with serious intelligence agencies knew – that Iran had a nuclear weapons program. But we did not know the extent of it – the scale, the scope. There are many things that adjust in the presentation that Netanyahu showed that were new.

DORAN: I think that started before he even finished.

DERMER: Yes.

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: For instance, he showed something about the Fordow facility, which is that facility that's built into the side of a mountain. Why would the Iranians build such a facility in the side of mountain? Well, one thing he showed was plans. And we can now prove that that facility was designed for a facility for nuclear weapons. There were suspicions that that was the case. But now you sort of can prove it.

The other thing we can show is how Iran tried to deceive the international community in 2003, when they shifted from having this nuclear weapons program to then – because of the war in Iraq, because of the threat that they perceived to be on their program – supposedly stopping the program. But really, they just shifted it into a dual-use program and, under the aegis of scientific know-how, decided to advance their program. And we can see the falsification of all the reports to the IAEA.
Israel, Iran, and the Future of the Iranian Nuclear Deal: A Conversation with Ron Dermer, Israel’s Ambassador to the United States  |  May 10th, 2018

Now you will recall that our opposition to the nuclear deal with Iran was not based on the premise that we were concerned, first and foremost, that Iran was going to violate this deal. That was never our main concern with the deal. And don’t take my word for it. Just read the prime minister’s speech in 2015 to Congress. Just read exactly what he said. The greater danger, he said, is not that Iran is going to get to a single bomb by violating the deal. He said Iran will get to an entire nuclear arsenal by keeping the deal. A major flaw in the nuclear deal, so thankfully the president announced his decision to withdraw the U.S. from the deal and restore sanctions.

The major flaw was that all of these restrictions are automatically removed. Those two words – “automatically removed” – that’s why Israel was opposed to it: it wasn’t connected in any way to Iran’s behavior; it wasn’t connected in any way to their aggression in the region; to their commitment to destroy us; to them acting responsibly in any way. So Iran, under the deal, could continue to be the foremost terrorist sponsor in the world and, in 10 years or 12 years, have simply all of these restrictions removed. And not sneak in or break in to the nuclear club, but simply walk in, by unlimited enrichment of uranium and a breakout time basically close to zero. And that will happen. And that’s actually not my words. That’s former President Barack Obama’s words. He said it in an NPR interview: “in year 12, the breakout time is close to zero.” Yeah, that’s right. That was a real moment of candor. So our main opposition was this: by keeping the deal – that’s how bad it is – Iran actually can get to an entire nuclear arsenal.

But for those who are focused on the violation of the deal, and whether they did or did not violate the deal – which, again, to me is secondary. I say all the time this deal puts us on cruise control heading over a cliff. Israel was always focused on the cliff. When people say the deal is working, they’re saying the cruise control is working. They’re not focused on the cliff. But let’s say you’re focused on the cruise control. Iran violated the deal. There’s no question about it. And what Netanyahu showed were two, I think, fundamental areas of violation. The first was they falsified all of their documentation to the IAEA in December 2015, which was the critical step before the deal actually began to be implemented. There was a final report...

**DORAN:** This is for the possible military dimensions?

**DERMER:** Right. So they have this thing in the lexicon, the jargon of the business called PMD – possible military dimensions of Iran’s program. There were a number of outstanding questions that the International Atomic Energy Agency had. And they said, “well, we have all these problems: A, B, C, D, E, F, G.” And then Iran gave their report and said, “A, no, no, no, no, no, nothing.” And what the IAEA essentially did was, “OK. They say there’s nothing there. Here’s the concerns we have. Let’s just agree to disagree and move on to do the deal.” Now, now we know that all of the statements that they made we can prove are totally false. So if the IAEA had this information on the eve of that report, they could not have moved forward to do the deal. That is what the White House meant when they said this deal was premised on a lie. The whole last step of the deal of the IAEA – to basically sign off, with which they effectively whitewash the program. It could not have happened if they had this information. Absolutely not.

But the second issue is a daily violation of the deal: that Iran has a secret nuclear weapons program that they’re actively engaged in hiding. They’re putting this information in the vaults. The first paragraph of the JCPOA is that Iran commits to not seeking to develop nuclear weapons. Well, why are you keeping all that information in the vaults? And you have an active program of hiding this. It wasn’t that this was in a vault that was gathering dust for 15 or 20 years. This information was moved. I’m not going to go in any more than that. But this information was moved. They were actively engaged in an effort to hide a nuclear weapons program from the world. That is a violation. The truth is there are people who just don’t want to see a violation. Prophet Jeremiah once said, “They have eyes that don’t see and ears that don’t hear.”

**DORAN:** It was embarrassing for them. I have to say I almost felt sorry for the Iranians.

**DERMER:** That’s the story. Because people don’t want to deal with the consequences of what it means. So they don’t want to admit it. Again, the violation is the small problem with the deal. They did violate it. The big problem is just cruise control over the cliff. And what President Trump did this week is he actually turned the wheel. He took it off cruise control and turned the wheel. That doesn’t mean that it’s a smooth road ahead. It doesn’t mean that we don’t have a ditch or a pothole and all sorts of obstacles. But we’re no longer on cruise control over the cliff. And the other thing before I let you actually ask me a question...

(LAUGHTER)

**DERMER:** ...Is understand this is the nuclear side of the deal. So the way people conventionally look at the deal: they said, “well, Iran gave on the nuclear side, and they got on the sanctions side.” But in fact Iran got on the nuclear side and got on the sanctions side. It got on both.

On the nuclear side, it gets a clear path to the arsenal. Those people who say publicly that this deal froze Iran’s nuclear program: false statement. Iran today under this deal is advancing its nuclear program. They are doing research on advanced...
centrifuges. They have essentially mothballed old technology. They're working on new technology under this deal legally. So when those restrictions come out, they're not going to be where they were 10 years before. They would be much more advanced because they'd have centrifuges that can enrich uranium A 10 times that level. My favorite line in this farce of an agreement that was signed is: over the next decade, Iran can only do R&D on the IR-2, 4, 6, and 8, which is second, fourth, sixth, eighth generation centrifuges. That's the restrictions on Iran. Only doing R&D two, four, six and eight. That's like telling Apple that for the next decade, you can only do R&D on the iPhone 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15. It's absurd. So that's the nuclear side. It was bad enough.

But there was a price to doing the deal, which is removing all those sanctions. Three years ago, Iran was facing headwinds – massive sanctions: oil sanctions and swift sanctions. The financial and oil together, they were really crippling. And it was causing a problem for them. And we could see it. And your intelligence agencies could see it. They had to sort of make decisions of: do I support this terror group or do I support that terror group? Because they were under a huge cash squeeze. Their economy was collapsing by about 7 percent over an 18-month period.

And it is true that you had sanctions on Iran for many years. But you only had crippling sanctions for 18 months. And what happened when they actually made the interim agreement in 2013 was the rug was pulled out from under the sanctions. The expectations game changed, and that affects economies. And Iran got out from this massive pressure cooker that they were in. And the sanctions relief has unleashed this Iranian tiger to run wild through the Middle East. You see it in Iraq. And you see it in Yemen. And you see it in Lebanon, of course, where they effectively control that country through Hezbollah. It has made them far richer and far more dangerous.

And Iran said – by the way, the whole time – that they were going to continue their policies. They didn't even have the courtesy to lie. Other regimes lie: you have to go back to a book written by its leader, you know, 15 years before to understand what his true plans were, but they were lying about peace and all of that. Iran didn't say that. They tweeted out – if I remember correctly, it was literally the eve of the signing of the deal – they will destroy Israel in 25 years. The leader of Iran tweeted it out when the members of the international community came and signed this deal. And they have declared clearly what they're going to do, if not deceive the international community of what they want to do. The only thing they did say is they said, “we never wanted nuclear weapons,” which the prime minister there showed what a joke that is. Remember the fatwa? There was a fatwa. I remember people talking about it. They can't do it for religious reasons, they said.

DERMER: John Kerry testified on that before Congress. Let me ask a question now.

DERMER: You want to ask a question.

DERMER: Let's speak. I want to ask you a question.

DERMER: You didn't invite me to just speak?

DERMER: I did. I did. But I want the...

DERMER: All right. It's early. It's early.

DORAN: ...The pretense of the conversation.

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: Those who are focused on their cruise control, their argument is: “OK, the deal's not perfect, but it does have some meaningful restrictions; they're not all that we'd want, but they are meaningful. And right now, they were useful to Israel.” We have Israelis saying that. I don't know - you know, 23...

DERMER: I...

DORAN: ...Left-wing former generals that, you know...

DERMER: It's the prime minister there, the person who's been elected...

DORAN: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Let me get the question out. Let me get the question...

DERMER: You'll get it. But the person who's been elected prime minister four times and has been the most opposed to this nuclear deal of any leader in the world disagrees with those former generals and former officials and everything. And we are a democracy. And the prime minister of Israel speaks for the people that he leads, and they're the ones, ultimately, who have to decide the policy. And when generals decide policies and not political leaders, that's not a democracy.
DORAN: OK. So now, the question...

DERMER: That's the little point that is almost never made.

DORAN: The question is: well, they have an argument. Their argument is: “there are some meaningful restrictions, and those are useful to Israel. And it would've been better to have worked to contain Iran while keeping those restrictions in place rather than just ripping them up because now we're back to the jungle.” And so what's your answer to that?

DERMER: In how many parts do you want me to give the answer to that?

DORAN: Less than 20 minutes.

DERMER: No, this is a...

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: OK. I completely disagree. Iran is either a good actor on the international stage or a bad actor. And this deal gave people the sense that they were being a good actor, when all it did was enable them, ultimately, to get to where they want to go, and then – understand – to get to the deal itself: the so-called restrictions and the benefits of these restrictions. To make nuclear weapons, you need three things. You need the enriched uranium. It's sort of the gunpowder. You need the weaponization. And you need a way to deliver it – sort of the gun itself – which would be ballistic missiles. And I should say the uranium is more the bullet that you'd have to have, and the weapons program would be the gunpowder, and then the gun itself is actually a delivery system. So, three elements: missiles, the weaponization and the enriched uranium. The hardest thing to do, by the way, is the enriched uranium. And that's also the easiest one to see whether they are doing it or not. Because you can't do it in a room this size in a country that may be, you know, half the size of Europe. This deal – the JCPOA – actually stopped none of those three critical elements. On the case of enrichment, they put temporary restrictions on enrichment while they continued to work on new technology that will only make enrichment faster in the future.

What Iran is doing under this deal is they now have the time and space to try to work on the other elements. The most important for them would be the ballistic missiles because they need to develop that and to get to further longer-and-longer-range ballistic missiles – and then, the weaponization. And what you saw in the archive was that their program is very well-advanced. And in a few years' time, they can go to those vaults, open it up and then bring all these three elements in place in somewhere between 2025 and 2030 to actually have a nuclear arsenal that could put this city under threat.

Now, what were the restrictions that the deal put in place? People say, “well, they took out all their enriched uranium” – or most of the enriched uranium. They're left with about 300 kilos – “and they reduced their number of centrifuges.” But this is all old technology that they mastered. And when those restrictions are in place, they can legally – understand, legally – enrich mass amounts of uranium. So it's not really a restriction that really affects their long-term nuclear weapons program. It does not affect it.

The other thing that is said all the time is, “well, what about inspectors?” Inspectors didn't find what the prime minister showed. Inspectors haven't found anything. It's intelligence agencies that have actually found. And whether you have inspectors there or you don’t, understand: all the inspectors are doing is they're looking at the keys under the light of the lamp post. All they're taking is declared sites. And the inspectors go in, and they see exactly what the Iranians want them to see. And that gives people a sense that you have this verification and inspection regime. Well, these inspectors supposedly were there. Why didn't they come up with this? Why didn't we have this two years ago? Why didn't they find it? They're never going to find anything, the inspectors. The inspection regime is a joke. It's just something for people to feel good, like, as if they're going to find anything. They won't. And this is not a criticism of the IAEA. They don't have an intelligence agency in the IAEA. They all have is they can go to the places where Iran wants them to go. And then, of course, you remember before they did the deal that they actually inspected something in Parchin. They did the self-inspection. Iran provided the soil sample to the IAEA to check. It's like drug testing an athlete and having him present the sample for you to test, and then everyone saying, “yep, that's fine. Looks good to us!” The inspection regime doesn't provide you any security. And having all these verifications and monitoring mechanisms, this should only give comfort to people who don't know anything about the history of Iran's nuclear program. We did not know for years. And our intelligence agencies – I should say – are also not perfect. Don't assume, just because we found this, that we know everything that's going on. This is a huge intelligence coup, but it's also an intelligence failure. Why didn't we have this three years ago? Could have come in handy. But this existed three years ago, right? Why didn't we have it? And we didn't know for years about Natanz.
We didn’t know for years about Qom. And I would not assume that we know everything about Iran’s program today. And I think the premise that some people had was, “OK, these restrictions are in place. So let’s not deal with this problem now. Let’s deal with Iran’s aggression in the region in Syria and Lebanon and elsewhere. And we’ll deal with that nuclear program down the road.” I completely disagree with that approach. You have to deal with both problems right now. Because every year that goes by Iran becomes a much more dangerous power. And the price of confronting them in the future will be infinitely greater. One of the arguments that is made sometimes – even by people who oppose the deal – was that Iran got all the goodies upfront. You know, they got the money upfront, and now we have these restrictions in place. Also not true. That money that Iran got upfront – the $50 billion or $100 billion, depending on how you do the math – are basically frozen assets in banks of Iran’s money that they received from selling oil that were frozen in foreign bank accounts, and sort of unfreezing them, allowing that money to come back to Iran. That’s the signing bonus of the deal. That’s the small money of the deal.

The big money of the deal is Iran’s ability to sell oil on the global markets. When the sanctions were in place, it got to the point where Iran was only selling a million barrels a day. And now they are selling over 2.5 million barrels a day. That’s an extra 1.5 million barrels a day. Now the price of oil this morning is over $70 a barrel. We’ve been blessed somewhat, in the last two or three years, to not see the full effects of the disastrous sanctions relief because the price of oil has been relatively low. You remember it was about $120 a barrel three or four years ago. Well, now it’s $70. So do the math: $70 a barrel, an extra 1 1/2 million barrels a day selling oil. OK, that’s over $100 million a day. That’s $3 billion a month. That’s over $35 billion a year. That’s today at 2.5 million barrels at $70. But as investment comes into Iran, that number is going to go from 2.5 to 3 to 4 million, which they used to have. They used to produce a lot more oil. They haven’t had investment for a long time. As everyone’s working to deal with Iran and Syria, and deal with Iran and Lebanon, and allows all these investments to come into Iran, you’re going to see that their production of oil is going to grow. And the money won’t be $35 billion a year. It’ll be $50 billion. It’ll be $70 billion. It’ll be $80 billion. It could be $100 billion a year. And over 10 or 15 years, you’re talking about over a trillion dollars.

And I’d love to tell you that they’re going to use all that money to establish a GI Bill for returning members of the Revolutionary Guard. But what they’re going to do – and what they have done – is they’re going to take those monies, and they’re going to fuel their war machine. So if people think, “let’s just leave that deal in place, and we’ll deal with it when those restrictions are due to come out,” and the breakout time starts going down from a year down to zero in year 8, 9, 10, the Iran that we will face then will be infinitely stronger. Infinitely stronger. And if the international community does not show the will to confront a weak Iran now, I do not think they will show the will to confront a much stronger Iran tomorrow, which is why this decision by President Trump is so critical and why – I have to say – he gets, in my view, an enormous amount of credit, because he is not kicking the can down the road. He could have said, “these restrictions don’t automatically come off in my tenure. Not my problem. I’ll leave it to someone else.” And he didn’t do that. We wouldn’t have gone over the cliff in his administration – maybe not even in a second term if he gets reelected. He could have said, “it’s not my problem. I’ll deal with it later.” And he didn’t. And the people of Israel are deeply grateful to that. The Arab states are deeply grateful to that. And I think people who are concerned with the peace and security in the world should be grateful. You know, I heard yesterday – again, it’s a very short answer to a long question...

(LAUGHTER)

**DERMER:** But yesterday, I was running around, you know, doing media and hearing some media. And people said the allies of the United States are upset with this decision. Well, I’m the ambassador of Israel. We consider ourselves an ally of the United States – in fact, one of your most important allies in the world. And in terms of intelligence sharing, we’re either number one or number two in the world. We supported Trump’s decision. And it wasn’t just on the political level. It wasn’t just the prime minister. It was across the spectrum in Israel because we have seen what these results have been. And we can talk about it in a second. The Arabs in the region – pro-American regimes there – they supported the decision. So the British, the French and the Germans may not have supported the decision. But we are the guinea pigs in this failed experiment. And your allies who are there on the ground are telling you that this thing is very bad, and we’re very grateful that you changed it. So imagine if there were a deal with North Korea and the Japanese, and the South Koreans were fundamentally opposed to it – your allies in the region – but the British, the French and the Germans would say, “that’s a good deal.”

**DORAN:** So let me ask you about that, though. Because I was talking to a European yesterday, and he gave me the following scenario, which goes to your sanctions point. He said, from our perspective, this is all based on the U.N. resolution, and the United States is now in violation of the deal. Europe is going to stay in the deal. Europe is going to stay in the deal with Iran. Europe is going to work to make concessions to the Iranians to keep them in the deal. And they are going to set up mechanisms that are going to maintain European-Iranian trade, thereby undermining – so, I mean, your argument is, we impose the sanctions, and that will have a moderating – or at least a constraining – effect on the Iranians. His argument is: that’s not going to work because America is in violation of the deal. We can’t go back to the sanctions that we had in 2012 and
2013, and so what we've actually just created is a mess, and an opportunity for Iran to now to gain advantage by splitting America from its European allies. What's your...

DERMER: So did they say that in French or in German or...

DORAN: This was in Italian.

DERMER: I see, in Italian. Well, Europeans are many things, but I think they can count. And I think they're going to realize that when you have to choose between a $4,000 billion Iranian economy and an $18 trillion American economy, I think they're going to choose the American economy. And it's clear to me that President Trump is going to be prepared to use secondary sanctions on companies who do business with Iran. And I don't think a German bank will choose to cut itself off from the banking system of the United States in order to do business with Iran. And I don't think a French oil company will cut itself off from the United States. So it's really just a question of how much the president, the Treasury -- and he has the authorities to do so -- is going to exert pressure to prevent this from happening. And you saw the decision that they made about the Boeing deal. So anyone who thinks that President Trump is going to stop a deal for Boeing, but he's going to look the other way as European competitors to Boeing do business with Iran, has not read the president's Twitter feed for the last two and a half years. I think it's pretty clear what the president is going to do.

And I think their instinct is to stay in the deal. Because, understand, also, that Europe's instinct is to stay in the deal, because Europe is into containment. They do not have a policy of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran. Their policy is to contain a nuclear-armed Iran. It's a different policy. It's not the worst outcome for the Europeans. The worst outcome for the Europeans is that somebody would have a military strike against Iran. That's actually the worst outcome for them. A nuclear-armed Iran: no one wants it, you know? But no one wants poverty in Africa, either. So the question is: what are you prepared to do in order to stop it? And Europe's policy towards Iran is containment. It has been. And our policy towards a nuclear-armed Iran is prevention. The Arab states' policy is prevention. And there are some forces in the United States whose policy is prevention, too. One of them happens to sleep in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. So how do you bridge between a policy of prevention and a policy of containment? What I think actually Prime Minister Netanyahu did, in what he presented, is: I don't think he changed President Trump's mind about the deal. I mean, I know he didn't change President Trump's mind about the deal. President Trump was very clear about what he thought about this deal from the beginning. So he didn't change it. What I do think that Netanyahu did is he presented a bridge for any European with a modicum of intellectual honesty to walk over to the U.S. side.

DORAN: An international legal bridge, as well.

DERMER: Absolutely. And so if people are looking to say, "Hey, they violated the deal because they were actively engaged in hiding this program," they can go over to the U.S. side. If somebody wants to say they falsified all the reports to the IAEA, they can go over to the U.S. side. I think the critical question of how the sanctions are going to work and how fast they're going to be ratcheted up will be Iran's decision whether to continue with their program. And understand, you've got to separate two different issues when it comes to Iran's program.

DORAN: Wait, wait. Before you go there, can I just stay on the Europeans for a second? Are you seeing any signs that there are Europeans interested in taking the bridge that you describe?

DERMER: It's still...

DORAN: It's a psychological, international, legal bridge, right? Because what you're saying is the United States is actually economically coercing its allies. You're saying that they can feel better about the coercion if they take this psychological legal bridge.

DERMER: Yeah. I think that's right. The point about the capital markets is an important one, because the U.S. economy, as I said, it could be 40 times the size, 50 times the size of the Iranian economy. But global capital flows, the U.S. accounts for, I think, still over 50 percent of global capital flows. So one of the tough restrictions with the swift sanctions and the banking, and you raising the cost of business to Iran. You know, it's only been a few days. The prime minister presented this last Monday. When he presented it, the French had not seen it. The British had not seen it. The Germans hadn't seen it. The IAEA has not seen it. The only intelligence agency in the world who had that information was the CIA. It was given to them before. And they still have not gone through it, and I don't think that they have actually finished. It takes a number of weeks to do it because it's such a massive amount of information.

People from Britain and France came to Israel at the end of last week. And some of our people were in Vienna earlier this week to start the process of giving this information. So as they go through it, I think they will see clearly that they have that bridge. But you have to separate the political decision-makers versus business. Because the decision of whether a German bank is
going to do business or not is going to be a private business decision. They may ask their government to provide them with all guarantees and everything else. But they could subject themselves to sanctions. And there's no question that Trump's flagging that he was moving in this direction has prevented investment from going into Iran. So now that it's very clear where he is, and now people are worried about being sanctioned. Iran is not the most powerful economy in the world. So when you're dealing with big global businesses like Total and others, they have to do calculations. Do we really want to get involved with this, which would actually undermine our whole global business? And so it doesn't really matter what the EU – I mean, Mogherini at the EU, she may, you know, stay in the deal until somebody shuts out the lights.

DORAN: (Laughter)

DERMER: But it's what European businesses are going to do or not do. And this is a cover, this deal, for a policy of accepting a nuclear-armed Iran in a few years and hoping maybe something will happen in the interim, when all the evidence has shown over the last few years that the situation has just gotten worse. You remember that when the deal was presented, we were told it's either this deal or war. Then, it was hypotheticals, you know: what would happen. Now we're three years later, and this deal has actually brought war much closer. You saw what happened last night. I saw somebody somewhere reported this is because of Trump. I mean, it's amazing...

DORAN: Well, actually – actually, let's...

DERMER: ...it's amazing how people can honestly say that. I mean, we've been talking...

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: ...about this for weeks. The Iranians have been planning this for some time. And if anything, the deal that was made three years ago by fueling this war machine put Iran in a position to actually launch that strike yesterday. And the decision by Trump gives us a chance to avoid this happening more in the future. It's like blaming Churchill for the Nazis going into Luxembourg, Belgium and France the day that he became prime minister. It's ridiculous. But, you know, for people who support for the deal it has actually almost become a religion for them. It's beyond the actual facts. It's just, "this is what I believe. The facts don't interest me."

DORAN: Well, I agree with you that it was based on a lie. And part of the fiction was that there's some way to maneuver with Iran diplomatically so that we don't actually have to confront it. But if you deal with reality, you realize we actually have to confront this regime. So now this is what...

DERMER: And that the economic pressures actually were working. You know, the thing was, it took a long time – years and years – and, you know, I was by Prime Minister Netanyahu's side for 18 years now. And he has worked on this year after year after year to get people – because, look, we have a greater interest – that is, the people of Israel have a greater interest in solving this peacefully than anyone. There's no country on planet Earth that wants to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons more than the State of Israel. And if this deal would have done that, then I would have gone house to house to convince people to support it. The reason we so vehemently opposed it is because of Trump. I mean, it's amazing how people can honestly say that. I mean, we've been talking...

DORAN: ...because we're the ones who are going to pay the immediate price of the war. So we don't want to see a nuclear-armed Iran. We don't want to see a war. And yet we oppose this so strongly because we think it actually increases the prospects of both. And what you're seeing is exactly that, over the last three years. That this war, by unleashing this Iranian tiger, has created huge problems for us. And not just for us, but also for the Saudis through Yemen, where Iran is trying to do to them what it did to us through Hezbollah in Lebanon: a forward base to launch attacks against them. And the longer we go on this current path with the cruise control, it's not just that we're heading off a cliff on the nuclear side. In the meantime, you see this huge increase in Iran's aggression and this bet that people made that this will somehow bring Iran into the community of nations and that it will moderate their behavior. This game that goes on – that all the people in Iran, and these are moderates, and these are – this is a fanatic regime. There are differences within the regime. And the differences more or less come down to: can we dance with the devil? And you're the devil in this case, the United States of America. There are people in Iran who say, "we cannot do anything with the United States because opposition to the United States is the ideological glue that holds this whole thing together." And there are others, like Rouhani and Zarif, you know, on their charm offensive, who say, "no, no, we can dance with the devil and get to our goal. So it's smarter to fool the world, pull the wool over their eyes, and then we can get to exactly what we want to go to by actually doing deals with them." But the openness to the United States, a
lot of the people in Iran and the Iran's regime think that itself actually can actually dissolve the glue that holds the regime together. That's really the debate, not on what the objective is.

DORAN: Let's get to the hard military competition, though, because we have one now. And if I...

DERMER: And the people – I'm sorry – one second...

DORAN: I'm not going to let you do it.

DERMER: And the people of Iran are not your enemy. It's important for me to say that. They are not the problem. I would put them as the third most pro-American people in the Middle East after Israel, which is definitely first, and the Kurds second. And then I think the people of Iran, so it's the regime that's the problem. If this regime were to disappear tomorrow, you would actually have a friend in Iran, and I think Israel would have a friend in Iran. And history suggests that that's true. And it's been pretty tolerant. You know, Jews have – we've been knocked around in so many different civilizations for so long, we could tell a tolerant civilization when we see it. And historically, I mean, nothing has been like the United States of America, but I would put Persian civilization as a second. Definitely a distant second, but second. There's an openness and a tolerance historically there. It's a great civilization that's been led by these radicals for almost four decades that declare war against the United States, declare war against Israel. And are in war against the United States, and are in a war against Israel nonstop since the...

DORAN: OK. I want to get to the war now because if I'm not mistaken, last night, that's the first time the Iranians have fired missiles into Israel. If it's not the first time, it's one of the first. So you're actually in, if not an out-and-out war with Iran and Syria, it's a very serious hard power competition. And I just want to get your thoughts about it, because the situation there is complex. You've got Iran, and you've got Russia. I was surprised. It seems that, according to Defense Minister Lieberman last night, you hit all Iranian sites in Syria.

DERMER: He said nearly all, yeah.

DORAN: Nearly all or all – a lot of them. Are you not worried about a Russian reaction? Can you just talk about that dynamic a little bit, the triangle between you, Iran, Russia and Syria?

DERMER: Well, that triangle was all there for the last 24 hours because the prime minister yesterday was actually in Russia and was for many hours with President Putin. And he's made a number of trips to Russia. And the trips are essentially an opportunity for the prime minister to clarify and to reiterate to President Putin: “these are our objectives in Syria; these are our red lines; we're not going to allow Iran to establish these bases to attack us; we're not going to allow Iran to transport, transfer these sophisticated weapons to Hezbollah. We understand that you're pursuing your interests in Syria,” he says to the president, “that's not our issue, but I want you to know as you pursue your interests, we have to defend ourselves against this threat. It's a red line, and we're going to continue to do so, and Israel has to do what we have to do to maintain freedom of operation to act there.” And those conversations are actually very candid and, I think, very constructive. And every time he's done it, it has helped just make sure that even though we may have different interests, we're on the same page, and everyone understands each other, and what will be done. And it has avoided a needless confrontation with Russia in Syria thus far. And I think that's good for everybody concerned. And yesterday, I'll just repeat what was there in the press at this juncture.

We'll see if more things roll out in the hours or days ahead. But they launched a strike against us. Iran's Quds Force launched the strike of about two dozen rockets and missiles at us. We had to knock some of those down that were entering our territory. We then responded with what is a pretty broad strike against Iranian positions in Syria. And there was also engagement of Syrians against our strike, and action was also taken there as well. I don't want to say beyond what the defense minister said. I'm not sure if this is the end of the story at all. And this is a constant effort of Iran to establish those bases, to transfer the capabilities, and then to use those capabilities against us. And we're not going to let it happen. And it just means that we have to constantly be clear about our red lines, and we have to constantly enforce those red lines. And we'll continue to do it. But the situation is still quite sensitive. I'm not sure that everything is behind us.

DORAN: Now, Secretary Pompeo has said that we're developing a strategy with our allies to combat Iran across the board. Can you reveal any details to us of how the United States is working with you on this strategy?

DERMER: Well, yeah. We are in discussions with them, and they're in discussions with their other allies in the region. And they'll also have a discussion, I'm sure, with the Europeans. Look, I would separate this into two phases, because, as I said, there was a policy of containment versus a policy of prevention. And I think that the president just had to make a decision. It's hard to actually have a joint strategy when there is such a huge gap on some fundamental things. Now everyone knows where the president is. It's not a question mark on what he's going to do. He's done it. And so now I think the whole conversation about the joint strategy, given where he is on the JCPOA – or not where he is on the JCPOA – is an entirely different
conversation. And there’s no doubt, as the president has laid it out before, that he sees a problem of Iran’s nuclear issues, a problem with their regional aggression, a problem with their terrorism, a problem with their ballistic missiles, a problem with their human rights issues and everything. So you have the full gamut.

What happened in the weeks before the president made his decision is the Europeans were rushing to try to address some of those other issues in order to save the deal. It’s interesting. For about a year, when the deal was signed in July 2015 – it started to get implemented in January – no one in Europe was rushing to do anything about ballistic missiles. No one was rushing to do anything about Iran’s aggression. But when President Trump flagged that he was going to pull out of a deal unless there was a serious change, that’s when... It goes to show you they were prepared to accept the deal as is with almost no pushback. It’s only when President Trump said he’s willing to walk away that then they started to move. Well, he’s walked away. And now I think the interesting question will be: as he starts ratcheting up the economic pressures, you may see some Europeans who want to stay in the deal continue to work on other issues. If people are against ballistic missiles, there’s no reason why the decision of President Trump should affect their working with the United States – the French, the British, the Germans and others – on very tough sanctions if Iran continues to defy U.N. Security Council resolutions by launching these ballistic missiles. So we’ll have to see. But Europe may take a strategy of we want to stay in the deal as long as possible. And meanwhile, we’ll work with the United States on also these other issues. And perhaps the president will use the leverage of those sanctions to actually get them to move much faster on these other things. I don’t know.

DORAN: From the Israeli point of view though, aside from the JCPOA and the nuclear program, the Syria arena is the most worrisome and the most threatening. And I guess what I...

DERMER: The most...

DORAN: What I’m asking you is: are you satisfied with the level of discussion with the Americans about Syria? Are you satisfied with the level of discussion about other partners about Syria? What’s the number one priority with regard to the Israelis about Syria with regard to their discussions with their allies?

DERMER: Look. Syria is, I would say, the more urgent matter. The more serious matter, and the only existential threat, is that this Iranian regime would develop nuclear weapons. That’s the most important one for Israel. But it’s not the most urgent, because we’re dealing with the acute security challenge that we have in Syria. I think that there were issues about what was going to be done in Syria for the last year and a half. But those discussions were happening in a context where the United States was still in this deal. And by still being in this deal, that means that the U.S. had not also restored all their sanctions. Right now, as of this week, the United States is now ratcheting up dramatically economic pressures on Iran. And that is going to affect, I think, U.S. policy across the board, not just towards the nuclear program, but in Syria, in Yemen, and elsewhere. Because I’m pretty confident that the U.S. will not want to, for instance, simply leave Syria and cede to the Iranians. I was pretty confident about that before President Trump made his decision.

And he's not a president that wants to intervene in all these conflicts. But he understood, and he understands, and he said it publicly when he was with Macron. He said, "We don’t want to just defeat ISIS and then cede this ground to Iran." In fact, the words he used was, he wants to “achieve the objectives,” and, I think, he said “leave a footprint,” to make sure that you’re not ceding that to Iran because that’s a critical strategic interest for Israel, to not see Syria fall into the hands of the Iranians. And if you ask Israelis what they’d like to see happen in Syria – 100 Israelis, you’ll get 150 answers – if you ask them what they don’t want to see in Syria. It’s all the same thing. We don’t want to see it ceded to Iran. I do not believe this administration is going to cede Syria to the Iranians. I did not believe that before President Trump’s speech two days ago. And I’m even more confident today that they will do what’s necessary to push them back. And they fully back Israel’s right to defend itself, as you just heard yesterday. And I think that they will back ensuring that we have the freedom of operation to do what we need to do to defend ourselves.

DORAN: Hey, listen. We’re coming up to 10 o’clock now. Do you have a few minutes for questions?

DERMER: Sure.

DORAN: OK, great. So the ambassador has agreed to take questions if there are any. Hold on just a second. We have a microphone coming for you, sir. Could you just please identify yourself before asking the question? Your name and your affiliation.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: My name is [...]. I guess [my affiliation is] the University of Maryland. So when the details of the Iran deal started to leak out a couple of years ago, my impression was that Turkey and Saudi Arabia and Jordan and Egypt all made some announcements about starting their own nuclear program. And how does this all fit into what you are saying?
DERMER: That's a very good question. And it's one of, I think, the great intellectual travesties of the selling of the Iran nuclear deal that non-nuclear proliferation people were supportive of it and argued that this was going to help deal with the issue of nuclear proliferation when it was the exact opposite. And it was obvious. I think the way the prime minister put it in his speech to Congress — “this deal's not a farewell to arms; it's a farewell to arms control” — that's what he said. And it was, by the way, hypothetical, I mean, then in 2015. Now it's real. Now we can see how many governments in the region have suddenly discovered the benefits of nuclear energy. They didn't have it before because they know that this deal enables Iran to have a nuclear arsenal in a few years. And they're going to put themselves in a position to be right there with nuclear weapons of their own when Iran crosses that threshold. So this blows up the whole nuclear non-proliferation regime. And the reason why I say it's an intellectual travesty is these people who should be dedicated to ensuring that you don't have nuclear proliferation — and we've been blessed with that for 70 years, since 1945. 75 years now — 73 years — that we have not seen a nuclear attack.

And I think it's because for all the relevant actors, the traditional costs and benefits and mutually assured destruction and other things like that actually work. But when you're dealing with a militant Islamic regime that doesn't have regard for the lives of its own people, it's a whole different problem. And we've been blessed with an era of peace in the nuclear age. And then to see those who support nuclear non-proliferation get on a bandwagon for this nuclear deal, knowing that it's actually going achieve the exact opposite was, I think, a real intellectual travesty. And now we've seen the results. You said you saw it right then. But you could see it roll out over the last three years. And, of course, I'm a very careful diplomat, so I'm not going to say which countries are doing it. But there are many countries that are doing it. And on this trajectory, not only do we go off that cliff, but when we hit that cliff, you've got many, many nuclear-armed states in the Middle East, and that's a great danger. And the decision that was made this week by President Trump gives you a chance to avoid that. And it also, I think, changes the dynamic vis-a-vis North Korea, as well. Because how are you going to demand that North Korea denuclearize, when you've left Iran with these capacities and unlimited enrichment in a certain amount of time and effectively accepting a nuclear-armed Iran in the future? So I think he actually changes the dynamic now, and makes clear that the demand is: you're never getting a nuclear weapon, period. Not in Iran, not in North Korea. And I think that signal will prevent countries in our region, which is a very dangerous place, from rushing forward with the plans that they have. And you might be able to put that genie back in the bottle. The head was out already. And so hopefully, it will be done. But what President Trump did was the best step to prevent nuclear proliferation that we've seen in many, many years.

DORAN: I have to say, I was surprised to see the groupthink and to see how many people said black is white and white is black. It was really shocking. But I guess I'm naive. Yes, sir.

DERMER: You're not...

DORAN: Hold on for...

DERMER: I want to say before the question. You're not naive. I'll tell you what it is. And I think people don't think about it because, you know, you think about the analogies towards the '30s, and everybody knows there's this era of appeasement and everything that happened. But what they don't realize is the reason why there was appeasement in the 1930s was because of World War I, which may have been the dumbest war in history. 16 million people were killed in this trench warfare and mass slaughter. And so you had leaders who were elected who were good people, who were intelligent people, who were moral people, with only one goal: to avoid war at all costs. And as the information was coming in in the 1930s — you read the books, and you read the cables coming in, and you ask yourself, “What, do they not see it? Did they not hear? Did they not understand what was going on?” They saw everything. They just didn't want to see it because the consequences of seeing it would require them to take a stand, and they weren't prepared to do it. In fairness to them, I don't necessarily believe that their publics were prepared to do it, you know? Until Pearl Harbor, the United States was deeply isolationist. You can look at all of those Gallup polls in the '30s. Up until Pearl Harbor, they didn't want to do it. They didn't want to get involved because they had seen the slaughter that happened.

And what you have is a period of time with the last few years because of the consequences of Afghanistan and Iraq, and because you have a leadership that says, “you know what? We don't want to get involved in anything.” As the information is coming in, as the Iranian leadership is saying what it's going to do, everyone just wants to dismiss it, wants to bury it, doesn't want to deal with it. And that's how you can lead to a great danger, because the failure to deal with the threat in time in the '30s created the Second World War, which led to 60 million being killed, including 6 million of my people. But you have to understand the reason for the failure and that people can be subject to the same illusions, and fall prey to the same illusions for good reasons, not for bad reasons.

You shouldn't just cast them as all sort of bad people. They were operating in a certain context. And this is another reason why I admire the president's decision. Not only because he didn't kick the can down the road, but because he's not going to allow this problem to metastasize to a point where it's going to be far more dangerous for everybody. Doesn't mean, again, that we're on a clear path and that we don't have challenges and we solved all the problems because someone gave a good speech.
But this, to me, is, you know, you're earlier in that decade. And you're actually showing that you're prepared to confront it, and you're avoiding the potential catastrophe that could come. The good news for all those people who supported the deal is their legacy, in a certain way, will be saved because no one will see the catastrophe that would've happened had we not actually turned the wheel. We've now avoided the cliff. So no one will see that, and they can live with their delusions forever no matter happens.

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: Sir.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Yeah. [...] energy consultant. Your Excellency, thank you for your presentation. My question is about the endgame for Iran and targeting Israel – the existential threat. We know, with nuclear weapons, there's a radioactive plume. So we know what happened after Chernobyl. No one knew where that plume was going to go. It went in directions no one ever dreamed of. And we know that you're in a very small neighborhood. So that plume likely will wind up in Lebanon, Syria. And, there'll be mass casualties. Could you please discuss that, sir?

DERMER: You want me to talk about a nuclear strike in the future? I didn't quite fully understand the question.

MARKS: The question is: what is Iran's endgame? So if they want to destroy Israel, they're also going to potentially destroy the neighbors.

DERMER: Iran is not a regime that cares that much about the people of the region. I think that's been shown: not the Syrians, not the Lebanese, not their own people. They'll murder their own people in mass. So let's not rely on this regime to be concerned with human life. But look: Iran is very clear that they're dedicated to destroying Israel. And they not only openly declared, which is a travesty, that leaders of Iran can walk into places like the United Nations, or can sit in a chair – I saw an interview with an Iranian official who gets interviewed on one of the television networks. And, you know, foreign minister. No one asked him the simple question: why are you committed to the destruction of Israel? I would like to see that every single time an Iranian ambassador anywhere sits in a chair in an interview on CNN or BBC or anything else, say, “why is your country committed to destroying another country?” We just sort of dismiss it.

They're openly committed. It's not a secret plan. They're openly committed. They tweet about it. And they're actively working to achieve it through Hezbollah, which they've armed to the teeth. And they're trying to send them more and more sophisticated weapons. They're also trying now – after at first smuggling weapons and then trying to basically take kits to turn statistical weapons into precision-guided weapons – to build factories of precision-guided missiles in Syria and in Lebanon. And of course we're not going to allow that to happen because it's an acute danger. But they are doing this to sort of put a noose around Israel's neck. They're also supporting Hamas in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria: all around us. And I suppose what they would like to do is continue charming the world. They were hoping to do that. Ten years from now, or 12 years from now, to explode a nuclear device to show that they're a nuclear weapon state. All the people that claim that they were for prevention will immediately move to containment. They will immediately, say, “wow, you know, there's nothing we can do.” They already have nuclear weapons. And then you know what the argument would be then? The argument would be look at what Iran is doing surrounding Israel. We can't take action to stop Iran because then Israel will be in danger.

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: Yeah.

DERMER: You think I'm laughing?

DORAN: No, it's true.

DERMER: You're laughing.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: (Unintelligible).

DERMER: That – you see the problem in North Korea – understand the strategic dynamic in North Korea, the threats that are posed to Seoul and how that threat to Seoul or Tokyo or elsewhere prevents action from being taken and has gotten you to the point where you are. We all hope there'll be a good outcome, but we all know where we are. Imagine a situation very similar where Tel Aviv becomes Seoul. And the conventional threat to us is now backed with a nuclear umbrella, and then all these people, say, “hey, we have to live with a nuclear Iran.” And then all of a sudden you have a nuclear tripwire every time you take an action. Now, with the action that Israel had to take to defend itself yesterday, there wasn't a nuclear tripwire where we were worried we're dealing with a nuclear-armed Iran. But in a decade, that could happen under this deal once we go
off that cliff. So it's a huge problem. It's not just the nuclear threat. It's what the nuclear threat can do to also the conventional threat against Israel and our ability to respond in all sorts of calculations that go into it. There's also giving weapons to terror groups as well. Look, if you're stuck in a world where a fanatic regime has these weapons - you're stuck in it, you've got to do the best you can. But to not be stuck in it and to delude yourself and to simply allow yourself to walk in that world is negligence of historic proportions. And so what happened this week is literally a hinge of history. We have changed. We have turned the corner with all these challenges. We still have them. We haven't solved the problem. We haven't solved the problem of Iran and Syria, or of Hezbollah, which is a huge problem. But it's a hinge of history. And we hope we can avoid the worst, and we're committed to doing everything we can to defend ourselves.

DORAN: Oh, I suppose...

DERMER: One more.

DORAN: Your people are saying we're out of time.

DERMER: We'll give them one more.

DORAN: Do we have time for one more?

DERMER: Yeah, yeah. One more.

DORAN: Yeah, the ambassador says yes. Anyone have a question? Nope. OK. Oh, we have a question in the back.

DERMER: Sure.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: My name is [...]. Thank you very much for your lecture. I'm Japanese. I'm worrying about China at large. So every time, I am late to this issue. So after the conflict in Syria or Iran ends, maybe China will invest a lot in this region. And China will expand their influence in this region. So when we talk about Iran, when you talk about Israel and Saudi Arabia region, sometimes do the Middle Eastern countries forget about expanding influence of China in this region? So you're from Israel. So is this an acceptable situation? Or to how to deal with it, is my question. Thank you very much.

DERMER: Well, we have growing relations with China that have expanded considerably over the last 25 years. You know, one of the untold stories about Israel is the diplomatic flourishing that's going on. A few years ago, serious people in serious papers were reporting that Israel is more isolated than ever. Israel is less isolated than ever precisely because we're expanding our ties with countries, such as that small little country called China...

(LAUGHTER)

DERMER: ...And countries like India. Modi was the first Indian prime minister to visit Israel. The prime minister went and paid a reciprocal visit there. You know, and China and India, Japan. Abe was just in Israel last week as well. Ties with Africa, ties with Latin America, ties, really, with countries around the world. And the reason why these ties are happening – and I think it relates to your question as well – is because people want to partner with Israel on two things.

One is security and what we can offer in terms of those governments helping to keep their people safe. We have one of the most formidable intelligence agencies in the world. You saw last week, and this is a revelation of the atomic archive. But beyond that, in recent years, Israel has prevented maybe two dozen major terrorist attacks around the world. And that's helped save lives around the world. And so governments, who have security challenges facing international terror groups and all sorts of issues, look to Israel as a potential partner.

And the second thing is technology. Israel is a global technological power. You know, we're the size of New Jersey, and we've got about 9 million people. But in many years, in many areas – in agriculture, in water in autonomous vehicles, in cyber – Israel's become a global technological power. We're one-tenth of 1 percent of the world's population, and we account for – in Israel over the last two years – 20 percent of private global investment in cyber. So think about that. We're punching 200 times above our weight in Israel in cyber. And so that's attracting a lot of countries to come in. China is one of them, and China has invested a lot in Israeli technology. One of our senior economic officials told me that China accounts now for about 30 percent of the investment that's coming in. So they're actually punching more above even their great weight to invest in Israel. But we think this is a good thing. And we think these partnerships are a good thing.

And we think expanding our ties around the world is a good thing, although we never forget that we have one great ally in the world, which is the United States of America. That is a unique alliance that has been built over 70 years, and it's gone through administrations and through Congresses. And we never forget how important this alliance is with the United States of
Israel, Iran, and the Future of the Iranian Nuclear Deal: A Conversation with Ron Dermer, Israel’s Ambassador to the United States | May 10th, 2018

America. So as we continue to expand those ties with other countries around the world, we look forward to strengthening the most important alliance we have in the world, which is with the United States. Today, the alliance between Israel has actually never ever been stronger. And it’s never been deeper. And I think in the years ahead, it’s going to grow even stronger. In conclusion, I said that I think Israel will be America’s most important ally in the 21st century.

So people think I said that because, you know, President Trump is there, and we see eye to eye on Iran, or something. I actually said that in the first Independence Day speech I gave when I was ambassador four years ago, when we had a big difference of opinion with the previous administration on Iran. And we had a big difference of opinion with the previous administration on what was the best way to advance peace. I said I think Israel is going to become the most important ally for the United States. And we're a tiny country but a powerful country. And the 20th century's most important ally was clearly Britain, but Israel will be the most important because of those two things: because of security and because of technology. Because there's two great centers of innovation in the world: one's in Silicon Valley and the other is in Israel. And because Israel's a formidable security, military, and intelligence power. And I think as America's looking around the world, which is our partner that's going to do the most to keep our people safe and keep our people prosperous? I think there's no better ally than Israel. And, through thick and thin, we will be there for the United States, and share the interest, share values and also share a deep sense of destiny.

DORAN: Well, on that positive note, let's stop. Please thank me. Please thank me?

(LAUGHTER)

DORAN: Please help me – join me in thanking the ambassador.

DERMER: Thank you.

DORAN: You've been very generous with your time. We appreciate it.

DERMER: Thank you.