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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Mark — Beautifully written. It's too long for a letter, so I'm running it as a Response, which takes a brief bio. I'm happy to make it less vague if you want to give me a sentence or two that you'd prefer. Thanks so much. All the best, Jeff



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 The threat from Iran is real

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 One may believe that war is inherently wrong or that this
3 specific conflict is a mistake. But the claim that Iran poses no
4 threat to the United States is flatly contradicted by nearly 50 years
5 of history.

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 IN TWO RECENT opinion pieces, Laura Sibilgia and Dan
8 DeWalt offered critical perspectives on the United States' use of
9 force in Iran. However, their similarities end there.

10 While Ms. Sibia dispassionately explains the legal
11 framework governing the mobilization of the National Guard, Mr.
12 DeWalt launches into a polemic against Israel, asserting that
13 “Iran poses no threat to us.” He argues that Iran’s nuclear
14 program was crippled before the war and the Iranian regime is
15 too unstable to project power or threaten Americans.

16 One may believe that war is inherently wrong or that this
17 specific conflict is a mistake. One can even indulge Mr. DeWalt’s
18 suggestion that Benjamin Netanyahu is working “mysterious
19 magic” on Donald Trump if one believes in voodoo.

20 However, the claim that Iran poses no threat to the
21 United States is flatly contradicted by nearly 50 years of history.

22 * * *

23 SINCE THE 1979 seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran,
24 the Islamic Republic has engaged in a steady pattern of violence
25 against the United States, targeting U.S. service members,
26 diplomats, and civilians. For Iran, “Death to America” has not
27 been merely aspirational; it has been its functional modus
28 operandi.

29 Given the history, one can legitimately question why past
30 U.S. presidents allowed the threat posed by Iran to grow for so
31 long.

32 The record is extensive. Between 1983 and 1984,
33 Iranian-sponsored suicide bombings in Beirut killed over 260
34 Americans. In response, the U.S. State Department designated
35 Iran as a State Sponsor of Terrorism — a status it earned
36 repeatedly through its development of the “Axis of Resistance.”

37 This network of terrorist militias, including Hezbollah,
38 Hamas, and the Houthis, was designed to strike not only Israeli
39 interests but also U.S. interests without triggering a full-scale war.

40 From the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing to the 1998 East
41 Africa Embassy attacks and the incessant targeting of U.S. troops
42 in Iraq between 2003 and 2011, Iran-backed militias killed over
43 600 Americans and wounded thousands more.

44 In addition to insidious bombings, Iran's fingerprints have
45 been tied to the torture and murder of Navy diver Robert Stethem
46 on TWA Flight 847; the 1988 mining of the USS Samuel B.
47 Roberts, which nearly sank a U.S. frigate and injured 69 sailors;
48 and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole, which killed 17 American
49 sailors and wounded 39.

50 * * *

51 THE THREAT POSED by Iran remains lethal.

52 In January 2020, Iran fired missiles at the Al-Asad
53 Airbase, wounding over 100 Americans; in January 2024, an Iran-
54 backed militia used a drone to attack U.S. soldiers stationed at
55 military outpost in northeastern Jordan killing three and
56 wounding over 40. Between 2023 and 2025, Iran and its proxies
57 repeatedly attacked U.S. bases and Red Sea shipping, causing
58 further American casualties.

59 These statistics only account for the toll on American
60 lives (and does not include Jewish-Americans killed and sexually
61 brutalized by Hamas in the Oct. 7, 2023 massacre and
62 thereafter); the global toll is vastly higher.

63 Even after the June 2025 strikes on its nuclear facilities —
64 which Mr. DeWalt likely opposed yet now uses to support his
65 claim of a diminished threat — Iran accelerated its production of
66 ballistic missiles and drones designed to eventually reach the
67 American homeland.

68 The threat and impact of those destructive weapons is on
69 full display in the current round of fighting. The domestic threat
70 posed by Iran is equally real: Just last week, a federal jury in
71 Brooklyn — hardly a bastion of conservatism — convicted
72 Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operative Asif
73 Merchant of plotting to assassinate American politicians on U.S.
74 soil, including Donald Trump.

75 I should hope we could all agree, regardless of one's
76 political leanings, that a foreign power plotting assassinations
77 within our borders poses a direct threat to the United States.

78 * * *

79 IF MR. DEWALT’S opinion were less emotional, he might
80 have fairly pointed out that the threat posed by Iran to the United
81 States — unlike the threat to Israel — is not currently existential. I
82 would agree with him on that point.

83 Even so, given that Iran has been and continues to be a
84 threat to American lives and U.S. interests, why should our
85 leaders wait until the United States is facing an existential threat
86 to take the steps necessary to protect its citizens?

87 Indeed, one can fairly wonder why previous presidents
88 (including Donald Trump himself) did not sooner respond to
89 Iran’s “Death to America” objective with decisive force.

90 A more rational explanation for this conflict than
91 “mysterious magic” is that Iran’s insistence on building weapons
92 capable of striking U.S. interests and, eventually, the United
93 States itself, finally reached a breaking point.

94 The very real threat posed by Iran was not going to
95 magically disappear. Although it is not a popular view, I am glad
96 that this administration — notwithstanding its many other failings
97 — has taken the steps necessary to degrade Iran’s capabilities.

98 Destruction of the Islamic State’s military infrastructure
99 now is preferable to allowing its arsenal to grow — an arsenal
100 that, history proves, would be used to continue to kill and maim
101 Americans.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

102 **MARK A. BERMAN** is a trial attorney and appellate
103 litigator. This piece is a response to “[Vermont guardsmen are in](#)
104 [harm’s way. And for what?](#)” [Viewpoint, March 11].

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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