



Arsenals Emptied: The War in Iran Exposes the Strategic Vulnerability of the United States

Published on 12/07/2026

The war with Iran has depleted the United States' missile stockpiles. The solution? Focus on economical and mass-produced munitions. For decades, U.S. military planning has concentrated on "exquisite" weapon systems — extremely sophisticated and expensive. However, lessons learned from the conflict in Ukraine and, more recently, the war against Iran, have pushed the Department of Defense to adopt a "**high-low mix**" approach, prioritizing cheaper munitions that can be easily produced in large quantities. The lesson is clear: in war, mass matters, and the United States can no longer afford to shoot down thousand-dollar drones with million-dollar interceptors.

The Cost of War

In just the first 16 days of conflict against Iran, the United States exhausted about **40% of its THAAD interceptor stockpiles**. Since each interceptor costs about **15.5 million dollars**,

replenishing the stockpiles is not only a matter of time (it will take years), but also of economic sustainability.

The Shift Towards Efficiency

The defense budget for 2027 proposed by the Trump administration reflects this shift:

- **70% Target:** Nearly half of the munitions requested in the 2027 budget cost less than 600,000 dollars; this share is expected to rise to 70% by 2031.
- **New Programs:** The Air Force aims to acquire 27,000 cruise missiles at a unit cost of about 218,000 dollars. The Navy is working to complement its long-range anti-ship missiles (at 4.5 million dollars) with cheaper versions targeting a price of 300,000 dollars.
- **Industry Involvement:** The Pentagon has already signed agreements with emerging companies like **Anduril, CoAspire, and Castelion** to supply over 22,000 missiles (including cruise and hypersonic) starting in 2027.

The Political Obstacle

Despite the Pentagon's clear strategic direction, the funding process is stalled by political gridlock. The administration aims for a defense budget of **1.5 trillion dollars** (about 4.6% of GDP), but the maneuver is bogged down in a controversial 350 billion reconciliation bill.

Some House Republicans insist on tying these funds to electoral changes, creating friction with the Senate. Susan Collins (R-Maine), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has called it "a terrible risk" to rely on reconciliation instead of the normal appropriations process for defense.

Conclusion

Allocating 1.5 trillion dollars to defense is the correct response to current global instability. However, to be effective, this strategy requires a "rock-solid" demand signal for manufacturing companies. Congress must overcome political maneuvers and secure these funds through the regular process, allowing the industry to scale production and replenish the nation's arsenal.