

Covid-19, Iran, and the Middle East

An Interview with Dr. Stephen Bryen

by [Jerry Gordon](#) and Rod Reuven Dovid Bryant (April 2020)



US Troops at Camp El Taji in Iraq hit by rockets fired by Iran-controlled Kaitaib Hezollah militia, March 11, 2020

The Coronavirus Pandemic has not stopped Iran's proxy war machine from attacking undefended US bases in Iraq. According

to the latest World Health Organization report as of March 29, 2020, Iran ranks sixth in the world with 38,309 cases and 2,640 fatalities caused by the spread of the novel virus. In contrast, the US, Spain and Italy appear to be accelerating the spread of COVID-19 with new cases reported as the epicenter of the Pandemic has shifted to the West.

**World COVID-19 Impact
Selected Countries as of 3/29/20**

<u>Country, Other</u>	<u>Total Cases</u>	<u>New Cases</u>	<u>Total Deaths</u>
<u>USA</u>	131,366	7,788	2,328
<u>Italy</u>	97,689	5,217	10,779
<u>China</u>	81,439	45	3,300
<u>Spain</u>	78,799	5,564	6,606
<u>Germany</u>	58,247	552	455
<u>Iran</u>	38,309	2,901	2,640
<u>France</u>	37,575		2,314
<u>UK</u>	19,522	2,433	1,228
Global	702,368	39,286	33,178

Among those infected and fatalities in Iran were several IRGC senior officers, a Senior Ayatollah, a health minister and a key adviser to Ayatollah Khamenei. Iran has not adopted a disciplined approach to control the community spread of the novel and deadly virus. As Lebanon is also afflicted with the coronavirus, amid a roiling economic crisis, it has announced that it will be locked down for

two weeks, effectively barring travel from several countries in the Gulf region, notably Iran.

The contrast is with what Israel has done to defend against the novel virus. It has implemented a partial lockdown, called up reservists in its Medical Corps to bolster its health system requested its citizen abroad return home. As of March 29, 2020, Israel has 3,865 coronavirus cases and 15 fatalities. Meanwhile, the MIGAL medical research center in northern Galilee appears to have a running start on development of a promising oral vaccine to combat the novel coronavirus based on transfer from infected poultry to humans.

Despite the onslaught of the coronavirus, Iran's Shiite proxies in Iraq, were engaged in a rocket war with US and coalition forces bases north and south of Baghdad. It is the continuing revenge campaign by the Shiite Popular Mobilization Force Kataib Hezbollah militia, whose commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was killed in a US drone hellfire missile attack in late December 2019 that also took out the late Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani. The revenge campaign began with the January 8, 2020 Iranian short-range precision ballistic missile attack on the al Asad airbase in Western Iraq that injured dozens of US personnel. Last week witnessed a series of Katyusha and Grad rocket attacks on El Taji and Bismayah coalition bases in Iraq resulting in killing of US and UK soldiers and contractors and injuring Iraqi air defense soldiers and Polish NATO trainers. These attacks brought a warning from US Defense Secretary Esper followed by launch of US coalition air attacks on Kataib Hezbollah weapons facilities that produced casualties, among them suspected IRGC officers and Shiite proxy fighters. Following these attacks, the US announced it was rushing Patriot air defense batteries to these bases that may not be effective against short range rocket, mortar and missile threats. The US Army has yet to deploy the two Iron Dome batteries it purchased from Israel's Rafael Industries that could address this rocket threat.

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This conundrum about the gap in US short range rocket defense

prompted us to bring back Dr. Stephen Bryen for a wide ranging discussions about the lack of an adequate US defense against Iran and proxy precision rockets and missiles, Turkey's surprising armed drones used in Syria armed with Umtas or Mizrak missiles similar to Israel's Spike missile. Also addressed is the conflicted relations between Turkey's Erdogan and Russia's Putin, backer of the Assad Regime, in the battle for geo-political dominance in Syria and in Libya.

Dr. Bryen is a former Reagan era Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for technical security, a noted Military Technologist and Asia Times Columnist. Bryen found the US Army rationale for not deploying the two Iron Dome batteries for base defense in the Middle East as both "incomprehensible and irresponsible." He contends that deploying the Patriot batteries would be like launching a "\$1 million missile to take down the equivalent of a \$1,000 rocket." He considers the alleged explanation for the cancellation that Rafael Industries refusal to supply the source codes as questionable as it is not required for integration of Iron Dome in a US layered defense system. He speculates that perhaps Raytheon, a partner in the development of Iron Dome—it supplies the sensors for the Tamir interceptors—might be angling to convince the Army to develop a competitive system. Bryen noted that Raytheon was involved in the lobbying effort with the Army that ended the billion-dollar MEADS international development program.



Michael Peck writing in *The National Interest* blog "[Israel's Iron Dome System Has Cracked](#)" noted comments in Congressional testimony of General John Murray of the Army Future Command:

A top U.S. Army general told Congress that Iron Dome can't be integrated into the Army's new Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System (IBCS) air and missile defense system. Despite Army protests, Congress in 2019 mandated the Army buy two Iron Dome batteries. But in February 2020, General John Murray, chief of Army Futures Command, told the House Armed Services Committee that Iron Dome was not compatible with IBCS.

It took us longer to acquire those two batteries than we would have liked for a lot of different reasons," Murray testified.

We believe we cannot integrate them into our air defense system based upon some interoperability challenges, some cyber [security] challenges, and some other challenges. So, what we ended up having is two stand-alone batteries that will be very capable, but they cannot be integrated. My assessment right now is, it would be—and I hate to ever use the word 'impossible'—but exceptionally difficult to integrate Iron Dome into our layered air defense architecture [and] to get Iron Dome talk to other systems, other radars, specifically the Sentinel radar," Murray told a reporter for *Breaking Defense*.

What you're probably—almost certainly—going to see is two standalone systems, and if the best we can do is standalone systems, we do not want to buy another two batteries.

Peck noted the rebuttal to General Murray's Armed Services Congressional testimony by Army Space and Missile Command chief Lt. General Karbler:

Yet other U.S. commanders seem to wish they could have more Iron Domes, after pro-Iranian militias in Iraq killed two Americans and one Briton in a rocket attack on Camp Taji, Iraq, on March 11th. "We know that Iron Dome has a combat-proven capability," Lt. Gen. Daniel Karbler, head of Army Space and Missile Defense Command told *Army Times*.

“I’ve got to assume that it would have worked, given it was in the optimal state of readiness as well as positioned to defend that particular asset.”

Peck raised the issue of why General Murray testified against use of Israel’s Iron Dome system:

The more interesting question is what this means for missile defense overall. Whatever its merits or flaws, Iron Dome is the most combat-tested defense system of its kind. It has become the poster child for missile defense, offering the dream that soldiers and civilians can be protected not just from ICBMs, but also from tactical rockets and mortar shells.

Given the Grad and Katyusha rocket attacks on US coalition bases in Iraq cited by General Karbler, Bryen’s criticism warrants Congressional Armed Services Committee oversight hearings on why Iron Dome batteries were not deployed to deal with the lethal threats of Iran’s Iraqi Shiite proxies.

Against this background what follows is the Israel News Talk Radio–*Beyond the Matrix* with Dr. Stephen Bryen.

Rod Bryant: Welcome to *Beyond the Matrix*, with Rod Bryant and Jerry Gordon on Israel News Talk Radio. We are live streaming this show on YouTube at Netiv Online. One of the channels will be called BTM for *Beyond the Matrix*. Next week we will be addressing issues created by the coronavirus Pandemic. We are trying to keep our listeners informed on what is happening

with Iran, in Israel, with Syria just to keep an open flow of information for people to know what is going on. The big question is “Has the coronavirus curtail Iran’s proxy war machine?”

Jerry Gordon: Iran is amongst the world’s countries most afflicted with the coronavirus. The coronavirus has taken down some of its significant leaders in the IRGC and the Mullahcracy as we call it, with the recent death of a Senior Ayatollah.

Rod Bryant: I understand that we haven’t heard from the Supreme Ruler, Ayatollah Khamenei in a couple of weeks as well. We really don’t know whether there could be a lot more of the top officials infected or who have died. We may not know that for a while.

Jerry Gordon: The Pandemic hasn’t put a dent in the revenge attacks in Iraq by proxy Shiite militias that have killed US and British soldiers and consultants and even wounded dozens of Iraqi soldiers. It behooves us to find out why the US Army hasn’t deployed an effective anti-short-range rocket and missile defense system like Israel’s Iron Dome.

Rod Bryant: Right, they had the Iron Dome batteries available, but they haven’t deployed or used it. That is the big head scratcher. We are having Stephen Bryen as our guest to discuss this. I just want to say thank you to those people who are watching the program on YouTube at Netiv Online.

Rod Bryant: Thank you so much for joining us. Steve, there were UK and US soldiers who were killed and injured by rocket attacks at the Al-Taji, coalition base north of Baghdad. That sparked retaliation by coalition air resulting in casualties. Was Iran behind the attack by its Shiite Iraqi militia proxy?

Stephen Bryen: It is certain that it was Shia proxies who launched the Katyushas. Whether there were Iranians standing next to them is speculative. However, I would note that when the US retaliated at least one or two Iranians were killed in the retaliation operation against the Shia proxy, which is a Hezbollah spin off. The chances are the IRGC were standing there and helping them. I think the weapons come from Iran in close coordination with these Shia groups in Iraq. There is no doubt where these weapons came from.

Rod Bryant: There are reports that the IRGC Generals and Ayatollahs are among the dead in Iran. Do you think that this is going to have a serious effect on their ability to continue the proxy campaigns against the US in Iraq and Israel in Syria?

Stephen Bryen: You know it's interesting because Lebanon announced that it was closing its international airport, which means the Iranians can't travel there. I would imagine that it won't be long before Baghdad closes its airport, because they're afraid of the spread of this Pandemic. The problem is that it is not easily contained. Particularly in places where there is not very good social organization, let's call it that. Which certainly is the case in Iran. That is what it looks like to me in Iraq or for that matter in Lebanon and Syria. It is possible that this Pandemic could get way out of hand in those places because they're disorganized.

Jerry Gordon: Steve, the US has close to 90,000 troops in bases in the Middle East and in South Asia. What anti-rocket and short-range missile defense systems do these bases have, if any, given these recent attacks?

Stephen Bryen: We don't have any. There was an announcement recently that the United States is rushing Patriot batteries to Iraq. The Patriot is not designed against short-range rockets and Katyushas. The trajectory of the Katyusha is completely different from a ballistic missile. So, whether the Patriot could be effective against those kinds of attacks, I think the answer is, it can't be. It may be okay against bigger missiles like the Iranian Kaims. With Katyushas and Grads, the answer is no. We don't have anything deployed at all right now. The Patriot is not going to solve the immediate problem. The other factor is that Patriot is an extremely expensive system to operate. Each Patriot interceptor missile costs in excess of \$1 million. You are firing at a \$1000 rocket with a million-dollar payload. It's not very cost effective.

Rod Bryen: The Patriot batteries are primarily high-altitude defense weapons.

Stephen Bryen: They are not that high. If you look at all the examples we know of where the Patriot has intercepted something, it's usually something you can see very easily, which means 2 to 3000 feet up, not much more than that. One of the weaknesses of the system is it doesn't catch them early enough. It waits too long.

Jerry Gordon: Steve, with that in mind, the US Army is allegedly considering ending a proposed billion-dollar buy of the Israeli jointly developed Iron Dome System.

Stephen Bryen: They cancelled any further purchases of Iron Dome. They bought two systems and then they cancelled any further purchases. The Army said they were not going to deploy the batteries they have. It's incomprehensible. Here is a system that could defend our bases, we have a couple of them, they could be deployed right away. The Army is throwing every excuse they can think of to explain their irresponsibility. I think it's irresponsible. That's the key point. There is no reason why these couldn't have been placed at our vulnerable bases in Iraq. Absolutely no reason.

Rod Bryant: What was all the discussion about codes? That Israel was not willing to share certain source codes.

Stephen Bryen: The army was demanding from Israel that they turn over the source codes for the Iron Dome System and the Israeli company Rafael said no.

Rod Bryant: Is that a programming issue? They don't want somebody to have source codes.

Stephen Bryen: It is the logic and the databases of the system that make it functional. The US never exports source codes to anybody. Period. Full stop. We don't do it. I don't think

Israel does it. Unless there's a specific special version of the software they might export for some reason. To make a long story short, the Israelis declined the request. The question is why the request was made. There it gets murky. The Army is saying, "Well, we want to integrate it with the larger system, and we need to have the source code." Well, you don't need the source code to integrate anything. All you need is an API, the ability to connect. That's all you need. So, it raised a suspicion that this was an effort to steal the information behind Iron Dome.

Rod Bryant: I wonder sometimes if contractors might have a play in this whole thing.

Stephen Bryen: Well, I think that they do.

Rod Bryen: Like Raytheon?

Stephen Bryen: The only player here that matters is Raytheon, because Raytheon is the Patriot builder and wants to get the contract for a new system if one is authorized. Nothing has been authorized yet. The Congress has pointed in the direction of one integrated system built on top of existing platforms. It is likely that one might get authorized. As you know Raytheon is a partner of Rafael and Iron Dome. But it's mostly for the missile itself, which is the interceptor missile that's part of the system. The rest of the Tamir interceptor missile is made in Israel. The suspicion is Raytheon wants a bigger piece of the action. But there's no evidence. In the past, there was a very ambitious program called MEADS, The Medium Altitude Air Defense System, that was a partnership

between Lockheed, Finmeccanica in Italy, UK and Germany. MEADS was a very ambitious program. Raytheon which made the Patriot saw it as a threat. So, they ganged up with the army to kill it, and it was killed.

Rod Bryant: Wow.

Stephen Bryen: The US backed out of it after spending a couple of billion dollars.

Rod Bryant: The interesting thing is they have been talking since I was in Army Air Defense, about this integrated system and it has yet to materialize. I don't understand that. That was back in the early 90s.

Stephen Bryen: The Army believes in what is called Layered Air Defense. Which means low altitude, medium altitude, high altitude, slow flying, fast flying, supersonic, hypersonic. They want a total package. Which means that they'll never get one—in my opinion. Because it can't do that. It doesn't make sense.

Rod Bryant: Right and they've sat on the proverbial Santa Claus lap of the Pentagon and made their wishes that they're probably not going to get it.

Stephen Bryen: Well, they always do this. They always want more than you can give. And then they end up settling for far less and you're done.

Rod Bryant: That's the art of the military deal. Right?

Stephen Bryen: The secret sauce is it must cost more than a billion dollars, or it isn't worth it.

Jerry Gordon: Steve, Turkey is apparently using armed drones in the battle against Assad in Idlib province. So, what can you tell us?

Stephen Bryen: The Turks are using a pretty sophisticated armed drone with a missile called UMTAS, or sometimes it's called Mizrak. It looks a lot like the Israeli Spike missile. I won't say any more than that. It's made by a company in Turkey called Rokestan. It's a very capable missile, that the Turks were using along the Syrian border on their drones. They also use it from helicopters. The rack on the drones I understand came from the UK. It is a pretty good-sized precision-guided missile. It's 160mm in diameter, and it weighs almost 38kg. It's a pretty lethal missile. It also is a fire-and-forget weapon which is sophisticated rather than wired-guided or visually guided. That makes it more formidable. One of the features of it, which is very much like the Israeli Spike, is that you can change targets in mid-flight. That is a feature of Spike. I think it's likely connected to Spike in some way, let other people explain how. But there you have it, and it's quite a good weapon.

Jerry Gordon: Erdogan has been acting dangerously in his search to control Idlib province, including trying to invoke NATO Articles 4 and 5, over three dozen dead Turkish soldiers.

What's going on there?

Stephen Bryen: Article 4 is just a consultative article of the NATO agreement. Any NATO member can ask for a consultation. It doesn't require a vote. Article 5 is the collective security privilege. That means if one of the members is attacked, you can ask the other members for help to deal with the attack. The only time Article 5 has ever actually been invoked, and with some difficulty, was by the United States after the 9/11 attacks. And it was a very slow response and finally, they said, "Yes, well there's something." It was a very slow response. Partly because they didn't really think it was an attack on the United States from a serious foreign power. They thought it was an attack by Al-Qaeda, which was correct. In any case, Article 5 requires unanimous vote. Every member must approve. I can guarantee you that there will be a long line of objections to Turkey invoking Article 5, starting with Greece. The chances are zero that they could get anywhere with Article 5. An aggressive action by Turkey doesn't fit the conditions of Article 5 in any sense of the term. That notion was crazy. The Turks made their pitch on their Article 4 for consultation. People listened, said, "Thank you very much. Nice consultation. We hope everything will be alright for Turkey. Have a nice day."

Jerry Gordon: Erdogan then tried to attack the EU via Greece, by unloading thousands of refugees from the battles in Idlib.

Steve Bryen: He was doing that at the same time he was asking NATO for the consultations. It was the left hand and the right hand. He was going to hit you on the head with a hammer and ask for support on the other side. It was a rather foolish move. It also just simply angered all the Europeans who don't

need any more refugees right now. And certainly not under those kinds of conditions. If it was controlled or managed some way it would be one thing. However, when you start flooding people, it's a miserable thing to do to people, by the way. I feel really sorry for these poor refugees who are pushed up to the border and told, "You go over there. Cross the border. We don't want you anymore." That is a terrible thing to do to people and families with that hat kind of misery. His actions were Just plain horrible.

Rod Bryant: What leverage does Putin have to bring Erdogan into line in Syria?

Stephen Bryen: It's called the Russian army, the Russian Navy, the Russian Air Force.

Rod Bryant: Do you think we would be forced to help him?

Stephen Bryen: I think what Putin told him was, "If you keep it up, I'm fighting you." He moved two of his most advanced missile ships off the Syrian coast equipped with Kalibr cruise missiles that could take out everything in Turkey.

Rod Bryant: Basically, it wasn't a diplomatic matter, but he rattled some chains?

Stephen Bryen: I think he rattled very hard. I suspect that Erdogan was there with his tail between his legs during the Moscow meetings. Yes.

Rod Bryant: I was wondering if it was special relationship.

Stephen Bryen: It was special indeed. He said, "You're messing around with my country, Syria. You're causing me trouble. I don't like it."

Rod Bryant: Would the United States somehow come to the aid of Turkey, if that happened?

Stephen Bryen: No, I don't think so. Look, anything's possible these days. I don't want to rule it out. But what is the United States' interest in this? Obviously, we would love to see the end of the Syrian civil war and a stable settlement reached. By the way, the Russians aren't very different in that regard. They're not tied, inevitably, to the future of Assad and his regime. They've made that clear that they would love to see a settlement too. But the Russian interest is to keep their bases there because they want to be a major player in the Middle East and that's the only place they can play from right now. They have no other bases in the Middle East. Even that is a high risk. I think there is a convergence of interest there if the sides all recognize it. The problem is Assad won't cooperate and the Turks won't cooperate, and the Kurds won't cooperate, and the rebels won't cooperate. The big powers want it, but the players on the ground don't want it. The worst is Assad I think because he has scuttled deals in the past that the Russians tried to engineer.

Rod Bryant: With Turkey flexing its muscles and Russia forcing it down, I wonder whether our government and the governments

in Europe are saying, "Well, let Russia deal with it now."

Stephen Bryen: I think there was a moment, certainly in the United States, that we thought, "Well look, if the Russians and the Turks are finding it hard to get along, there's a chance for us to renew our relationship with them," and improve their presence in NATO. That was worth about two cents. It didn't go anywhere because there is nowhere to go. What are we going to do? At one point we were going to deliver new weapons to Turkey like the Patriot. Things are in the pipeline. We were not going to cut that off. I think they backed down because they realized there was nowhere to go, that it wasn't a very good idea.

Rod Bryant: Well, we didn't deliver on the shipment of F-35s.

Stephen Bryen: Yes, but that was tied specifically to the Turkish purchase of the S-400 air defense system. It had nothing to do with this business, whatever. It was a NATO issue that Turkey's acquisition of S-400 would compromise NATO's air defenses. Therefore, we didn't want them there. We pleaded with the Turks to take Patriot but not to do that. Turkey had other fish to fry. They wanted their S-400 system for several reasons, not the least of which is that they wanted to deal with the Russians.

Jerry Gordon: Steve, Erdogan is having his head handed to him in another arena of war and that is in Libya. The very strange coalition backing General Haftar who heads the Libyan National Army and is a former CIA asset. So, what's going on there?

Stephen Bryen: That's a very good question, because I'm not sure what is going on there. The Turks try to support the existing government put themselves at odds with the Russians, who were supporting the other side. Instead of using Turkish forces Erdogan started using mercenaries. Because they were afraid of what might happen to the Turkish forces. Then the mercenaries who were shipped were bombed. So, this is a royal screw up. That is what I would call it. I imagined that if the Turks could go home and shut up, they will. It's not going to be successful. Libya is the kind of place you just don't want to inject yourself unless you really think you can win fast. I don't think you can win fast. I don't even know what winning means in that context. You know the Turks cooked up the deal. The Turkish interests was largely to make a deal on the territorial seas in the area. They wanted to cut out Greece, Cyprus and Israel from being able to exploit these Mediterranean resources for oil and natural gas and prevent them from setting up a pipeline that would flow natural gas into Greece and Italy. Erdogan made this crazy claim that between Turkey and Libya they control the whole thing 100%. No one accepted it. That was Erdogan's great coup if you call it that. It created another kind of tension that had to be dealt with.

Jerry Gordon: There are news reports that the Israel Air Force appears to be attacking chemical weapons that pose a threat inside Syria and in the process killing Iranian generals.

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Stephen Bryen: I'm not sure about that. I think they were trying to go after missile warehouses. Whether they were also storing chemical weapons in those places, I'm just not certain about that. There have been reports that the Syrians have started up using some chemical weapons again. Mostly I think chlorine because that was one of those substances that wasn't banned by the deal that was struck on the use of the sarin gas which just covered nerve gas. It is possible that was in the warehouse, so that's what they bombed. However, I don't know if that would be Israel's priority. I think Israel's priority would be the missiles.

Rod Bryant: How is chlorine delivered?

Stephen Bryen: The way they've been doing it as I understand it is largely dumping barrels out of helicopters.

Rod Bryant: Just powdered chlorine?

Stephen Bryen: No, it's liquid. Yes, that is bursting on different neighborhoods and making people sick. That is what I understand that they also have used barrel bombs that they roll out of the back of helicopters. Those are explosives filled with nails, glass and other shrapnel to kill people.

Rod Bryant: It's terrible. That's horrible.

Stephen Bryen: It's nasty. There has been less of that recently, because there are fewer Syrian helicopters.

Jerry Gordon: Are Turkey and Russia trying to take over those oil fields held by Kurdish and US forces in eastern Syria?

Stephen Bryen: I think it's hard to say that's the case. I don't know. I think it would be very difficult for Turkey to try and do that because that would cause a general war with the Syrian regime. I don't think they would do that. I think the Turkish interest is up along the border to control that whole area if they could. Their main interest is to drive the Kurds out. Which is the Turkish fixation. That is my opinion.

Rod Bryant: Israel appears to have been on the forefront of developing a virus test and vaccines for the coronavirus Pandemic. Why is Israel on the forefront of this and no other advanced countries perhaps even the United States?

Stephen Bryen: Let's be fair. There is a lot of work being done all over the world. The United States for sure, Australia, China is working very hard and Japan. There is a great deal of work being done on this. Israel of course has a world class medical system and medical research as good as anywhere. The MIGAL institute in the Northern Galilee has been working for four years or more on a Coronavirus analog that is attacking chickens. And they came up with an oral vaccine against this version of coronavirus for chickens which is not the same as the Coronavirus that's hitting humans. However, because it is close enough that the Israelis believe that with some tweaking and changes it can be adapted as a human Coronavirus vaccine. That is very promising. I was excited by it because they had been working on the vaccine well ahead of other people and that gave them a considerable advantage.

Rod Bryant: I would like to shift to provide an overview analysis of the damaging effects from the Coronavirus on our country's economy and society.

Stephen Bryen: I think we must learn how to cope with this kind of crisis because this won't be the first or the last. We also must deal with it responsibly and without hysterics. I'm particularly concerned about the press reports.

Rod Bryant: Absolutely.

Stephen Bryant: Which has been exaggerating. That doesn't mean it is not terrible for those who are infected. In some places it is very extensive, like Italy, for example. In other places, like South Korea, this seems to not only be under control but declining very rapidly. Even in China, it is declining now. I think we must take a responsible approach. I think the President's proposals make a lot of sense for us in the United States. We are a well-organized country. If we do what is recommended, I think we'll come through it okay. The downside of all this is, it will cause economic problems and dislocations. It already has. When you start closing businesses and transportation hubs, it will impact the economy in a negative way. I think the thing that we should always keep the mind this is a transitory thing. The economy and the stock market will recover, if we don't panic, and if we behave sensibly, things will return to normal sooner rather than later. That is without the possibility of medications, which are emerging now that will help control coronavirus. In the bigger picture, the vaccines, which will emerge a little later that will be like a flu shot. Right now, the number of deaths

in the United States and even in Israel, are far fewer from Coronavirus than we have from the flu. We know what we're up against. We don't want everybody to get sick. We're trying to apply measures to prevent that. If people are disciplined, we'll be fine. The places that are at most risk are the ones that lack discipline, good organization and effective governments. Iran is a classic case. I think you will see similar problems in Iraq. Certainly, in Africa, they are having problems. And in places where there's a culture of not liking the government very much.

Rod Bryant: Or not trusting the government.

Stephen Bryen: Or trusting the government. And this is the classic case in Italy where Italians have for 500 years avoided the government at all costs, whatever government it was. They don't pay taxes. They do what they want. Well, that got them in trouble this time. So, discipline, organization, responsibility, and keep the panic levels down. You don't need 200,000 rolls of toilet paper in your house. You don't need enough hand wipes to wipe the whole world.

Rod Bryant: Wash your hands.

Stephen Bryen: There's not a chance that we won't produce enough. So, just be patient. And we'll get there.

Rod Bryant: That's good advice. We've seen the effect around here. I'm sure where you're are listening to this program, people are panicking and buying up all the toilet paper and

water which are the least things that you need if you have Coronavirus. I just don't understand. It blows my mind. I do understand that it comes from a culture of people who are not prepared mentally or spiritually for any disruption, they just panic. I have been telling people for years, just be prepared in general for anything. and you'll be okay whenever it comes.

Stephen Bryen: Exactly. The less they understand, the worse it is.

Rod Bryant: Absolutely. We have had an informative interview with you Steve. Hopefully, we will have you come back, soon. We say shalom from *Beyond the Matrix* until next time.

[Listen](#) to the *Israel News Talk Radio–Beyond the Matrix* interview with Dr. Stephen Bryen or watch this Netiv–Online You Tube video of the *Israel News Talk Radio–Beyond the Matrix* interview with Dr. Stephen Bryen

«[Previous Article](#) [Table of Contents](#) [Next Article](#)»

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