

Special Update

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Beam Me Up!

I thought perhaps it was time for some opinion and analysis. As I've watched action in the middle east, I was most strongly reminded of the engagement styles of the two commanders of the starship USS Enterprise (boldly going where no man has gone before). Kirk was straight-up pre-Vietnam fire: phasers blazing, gut instincts, that cowboy charge into the unknown. It captured how the US felt back then—post-WWII confidence that American hard power could fix damn near anything, spreading democracy with a firm hand, no apologies. Kirk would tweak every regulation if it got the job done, and his action felt heroic, like those old frontier tales before the real costs piled up.

Then Picard shows up in *The Next Generation*, and it hits different—like the nation finally sobered up after Vietnam. More constantly considering the effects of action, always circling back to the Prime Directive, talking things out before fists fly. Picard was all about diplomacy, alliances, holding back raw force. That post-Vietnam reckoning really sank in. The endless quagmire, the moral weight, the hard limits of brute strength. Picard represented a wiser America. Wiser because Picard considered ramifications beyond the immediate, although the consistency of the deferral of force by Picard made him more predictable (we're going to talk to them until there's no choice). Picard and the "new" Federation depended on soft power, negotiation, asking if the fight was worth the long haul.

The same consistent approach was exhibited by the Americans and Soviets through the 1980's and 1990's. Kissinger and Schultz and Baker (I really miss Casper Weinberger and Jeannie Kirkpatrick and Bill Casey) managed relations with the Russians and Egyptians and Palestinians and everybody in a way that made you hopeful we'd learned restraint, think twice before diving in headfirst. No wonder the action against Iran is so frightening to us. Initiated first-strikes against an enemy of forty-seven years seems almost sacrilegious.

Trump's Iran situation in 2025-2026 feels like Kirk's playbook dusted off and supercharged. That Twelve-Day War back in June '25—Israel strikes their nuclear sites first, we pile on with hits to Natanz, Fordow, the works—ends in a shaky ceasefire mediated by us and Qatar (Wikipedia, n.d.; Al Jazeera, 2025). Classic pre-Vietnam move: preempt the threat hard, skip the drawn-out talks. But this latest round? Operation Epic Fury kicks off February 28, 2026—joint U.S.-Israeli strikes take out Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei right at the start, along with top brass (NPR, 2026; Reuters, 2026a). Iran retaliates, oil prices spike, our casualties climb to seven by now. This past week, as of March 9, it's into the second week: nonstop strikes, Trump demanding "unconditional surrender" on Truth Social, trashing their new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei (Khamenei's son) as unacceptable, even floating ground troops to seize nuclear stockpiles (BBC, 2026; New York Times, 2026; Reuters, 2026b). It's all overwhelming force, that old exceptionalism roaring back—no quick off-ramp, pure resolve.

I don't have any proof to back up my opinion, but my guess is that by mid-week we begin to hear rumblings of the Saudi's and Qatar getting involved in some peach negotiations (as a matter of fact the Saudi's reached out to the Iranians last week).

The Iranians are getting some intelligence support from the Russians and Chinese, but that's not enough to survive if the US is committed to continuation of the bombing campaign. Domestically, Trump is losing momentum with mid-terms six-months off. I guess this whole diatribe began last night with a conversation with my dad. His question to me was, "How do we get out?" It struck me that we were both still thinking like Picard. How do we "fix" this? Rebuild Iran? Save their people? Make friends? Kirk wouldn't do that. He'd just stop flying over them and shooting phasers. Recovery is their problem. So don't be surprised if the campaign just stops. My guess is that this is the last week of the war, and that the market reaction generated by the hostilities will reset (slowly).

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