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Redefining Shock and Awe: What We Can Learn from Israel's Opening of Operation Rising Lion

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Imagine if Operation Overlord in World War II began with the elimination of Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command; Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS; Field Marshal Erwin Rommel; numerous other senior generals; and the destruction of all of Germany's air defenses, before a single Allied soldier landed on the beaches of Normandy. That's not an exaggerated hypothetical. It's a near-parallel to what Israel just did to Iran.

Israel's war against Iran is still ongoing. But what has already unfolded will be studied for decades.

Israel's current military operation against Iran is officially called Operation Rising Lion, launched on June 13, 2025, with a sweeping and precise preemptive strike. The operation was not just historic. It was transformational. It redefined what shock and awe can look like in the 21st century.

This was not merely a strike. It was a campaign—a layered, synchronized demonstration of modern operational art, built on deep intelligence, strategic deception, and the innovative fusion of old and new tools of war. Here's what it teaches us.

1. Surprise as a Core Element of Operational Art

Israel's campaign against Iran is a textbook case in modern operational art. It wasn't just an airstrike. It was a synchronized, multi-domain offensive that combined cyber, human intelligence, electronic warfare, airpower, special operations, and psychological operations.

Israel achieved surprise at the highest level. It launched a campaign that disrupted Iranian defenses before the first fighter jet even crossed the border. This is not warfare of the past. This is what large-scale, intelligence-driven combat looks like in 2025. The decisive moment in war often arrives long before the first bomb drops.

2. Deep Intelligence Penetration and Human Terrain Dominance

Perhaps the most stunning revelation is the depth to which Mossad and Israeli intelligence had penetrated Iran's inner military and nuclear circles. They not only knew where nuclear scientists and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders were located. They manipulated meeting schedules and lured multiple top generals into the same underground facility to be eliminated simultaneously.

Confirmed kills include:

- Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Mohammad Hossein Bagheri
- IRGC Commander Maj. Gen. Hossein Salami
- Khatam al-Anbia HQ Commander Maj. Gen. Gholam Ali Rashid
- IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Maj. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh
- Nine nuclear scientists

These were not replaceable figures. Many had served for decades and had no peer backups. Their loss was not just symbolic. It decapitated Iran's ability to coordinate large-scale retaliation.

Additionally, Quds Force Commander Esmail Qaani was struck, along with over 20 senior commanders targeted and eliminated in the first night alone. This wasn't just a blow. It was a beheading of Iran's strategic brain trust.

3. Combined Use of Low-Cost Tech and High-End Platforms

For months, Mossad smuggled hundreds of quadcopter drones into Iran. Smuggled piece by piece, hidden in suitcases, trucks, and shipping containers. These were assembled by trained teams inside the country and positioned near high-value targets: air defense sites, radar arrays, and mobile missile launcher zones.

This is a new model of saturation attack. Low-cost drones blind and disrupt. Then advanced platforms like F-35s and bunker busters follow in to strike deeply buried and hardened targets.

Ukraine pioneered this approach against Russian air bases. Israel just scaled it up strategically.

- The drones blinded radar and communications, clearing corridors for strike aircraft
- Teams targeted mobile missile launchers, knowing Iran had more missiles than launch vehicles. Israel attacked the bottleneck
- Dozens of radar sites, launchers, and coordination hubs were destroyed before Iran could respond

This is how Israel achieved aerial freedom of action. Not by dominating all airspace, but by tactically disabling the systems that mattered most.

4. Air Supremacy Without Traditional Air Superiority

Israel deployed approximately 200 aircraft during the first night of the operation. They operated for over two hours in Iranian airspace, including directly over Tehran. That is unprecedented in modern warfare.

How was this possible?

- Air defenses were blinded
- Radar jammers and cyber tools disrupted early warning systems
- Electronic warfare severed command coordination

Israel created a temporary operational corridor. It neutralized Iran's ability to track or respond without needing to control every piece of sky.

5. Crippling Retaliation Before It Happened

Iran did respond, but the result fell far short of expectations. Why?

Because Israel had already targeted and neutralized the trucks, radars, and commanders who would have organized a more coordinated and lethal retaliation. The Iranian immediate response was not just limited. It was late, confused, and largely ineffective.

Israel's opening strikes were not just about degrading Iran's nuclear infrastructure. They were a deliberate campaign to suppress retaliation by eliminating missile trucks, communication networks, and key leadership before they could act. This wasn't just precision warfare. It was a new model of deterrence.

6. Psychological and Strategic Effects

The impact was not only kinetic. It was psychological.

As former Mossad official Sima Shine said: "No one in Iran's high command can be sure they are not known to Israeli intelligence or next on the list."

That kind of uncertainty is debilitating. It generates fear and hesitation inside enemy leadership circles. It shifts the focus from offense to self-preservation. Israel seized the strategic initiative in every dimension—military, psychological, and political.

What the U.S. Military Should Learn

Operation Rising Lion is more than a regional operation. It is a global case study in modern warfare. Key lessons for the U.S. and other advanced militaries include:

- Strategic success depends on integration, not scale
- Decapitation of enemy leadership is not just possible, but now operationally viable
- Commercial drone swarms are part of the opening act, not an afterthought
- Suppressing the ability to retaliate can be more valuable than destroying offensive assets

This is a shift in how deterrence and defense must be understood.

Conclusion

This is the future of war. It is multi-domain. It is preemptive. It is asymmetric. It is built on intelligence and designed for initiative.

Israel didn't just strike Iran. It disarmed, disoriented, and destabilized a much larger adversary before the war had even begun in earnest.

Operation Rising Lion is a warning to adversaries and a blueprint for allies. With deep intelligence, strategic patience, and operational convergence, even the most fortified enemy can be cracked open.

The challenge for others is not to admire it from afar, but to understand it, internalize it, and adapt before the next war demands it.

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