



## Where will it lead too?



### War in the Gulf by Mol Smith The ragged rag.

This is a different war. For a start, it has no clear objective, other than to destroy as much of Iran’s weapons systems as the cost of munitions will allow. The Iranians have a mass of handheld, anti-aircraft rocket systems, supplied (bought from) Russia.

The war is not about Uranium enrichment, it’s the fact that Iran was developing ballistic missiles, that once operational, could strike the USA.

Such strikes need not carry nuclear warheads, conventional explosive ones

would still cause considerable damage hitting cities; just recall the Twin Towers! President Trump, for all his faults, could not allow that. The Iranians agreed to disable uranium enrichment at the recent talks, but refused to stop ballistic missile capability.

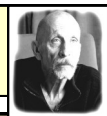
The world would be foolish to let the regime, a totally repressive one on the freedom of people, continue. The issue now though, is will

bombing, strategically, carried out currently by the US and Israel, bring that about?

It is impossible for the populace to seize control. Without weapons, they are powerless to

act. Only if the loyal Iranian Revolutionary guard betrayed their oaths and turned on the political leaders, or the general army, took control, could any such change taker place.

Israel is the main player here, not the USA. They are the ones close enough to have their cities hit by Iran by ballistic missile.



based on <https://san.com/cc/the-cost-of-israels-war-with-iran/> by Brett Baker, Ryan Robertso

### Escalating Conflict Comes at a High Cost

The intensifying confrontation between Israel and Iran is rapidly increasing military expenditures on both sides. In Israel, the cost of intercepting Iranian missile barrages alone can reach as much as \$200 million per day, particularly when advanced defence systems such as Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow 3 are activated.

Each layer of Israel's air defence network carries a significant price tag. Interceptions using the David's Sling system are estimated to cost roughly \$700,000 per activation, while the more advanced Arrow 3 system can cost up to \$4 million per interception. During large-scale missile attacks, expenses can escalate into the tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars within a single day.

#### The Financial Strain of Air Operations

Beyond missile defence, air operations impose additional financial pressure. Operating advanced fighter jets such as the F-35 costs approximately \$10,000 per flight hour, excluding maintenance, logistics, and munitions. Although the precise number of daily sorties is not publicly known, sustained aerial campaigns substantially increase defence spending.

#### Infrastructure Damage and Civilian Displacement

Iranian strikes have also inflicted considerable physical damage inside Israel. Hundreds of buildings have been damaged or destroyed, generating major



reconstruction costs. More than 5,000 residents have been displaced from their homes, with many temporarily housed in government-funded accommodations.

#### From Proxy Conflict to Direct Confrontation

Historically, Israel and Iran have engaged indirectly through regional proxy forces. However, recent exchanges of missile fire and airstrikes mark a more overt and direct phase of conflict. Israel's objectives reportedly include targeting Iranian military assets and nuclear facilities, while Iran appears focused on maintaining regime stability and continuing its uranium enrichment activities.

#### The Economic Toll of Prolonged War

Economic analysts warn that a prolonged conflict could significantly strain Israel's economy. According to estimates from the Aaron Institute for Economic Policy at Reichman University, a one-month war with Iran could cost approximately \$12 billion. Israeli officials are therefore under pressure to contain the conflict swiftly. While a short campaign may be financially manageable, extending the war could produce serious long-term economic consequences. As a former governor of the Bank of Israel cautioned, duration is the key variable — the longer the conflict continues, the heavier the economic burden becomes.

based on <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2026/02/22/russia-sold-iran-thousands-shoulder-rockets-secret-deal/> by Antonia Langford is a Freelance Journalist, based in Kyiv.

### Russia-Iran Air Defence Pact: A Strategic Recalibration

In a confidential €500 million defence agreement concluded in December in Moscow, Russia committed to supplying Iran with a substantial package of advanced, shoulder-fired air defence systems. The deal provides for the transfer of 500 Verba man-portable launch units and 2,500 associated 9M336 missiles over a three-year period,

alongside 500 Mowgli-2 night-vision targeting devices.

This acquisition represents Tehran's most significant effort to rebuild and modernise its air defence architecture following the extensive degradation of its systems during last year's 12-day conflict with Israel.

#### The Verba System: Capabilities and Strategic Implications

Introduced into Russian service in 2014, the Verba is a fourth-generation, infrared-guided MANPADS (Man-Portable Air Defence System). Designed for deployment by small, mobile teams, it is capable of engaging low-flying aircraft, helicopters,

cruise missiles, and unmanned aerial vehicles in head-on approaches.

Its advanced seeker technology enhances resistance to countermeasures and improves discrimination between decoys and genuine targets—an increasingly critical feature in contemporary aerial warfare. If deployed effectively, such systems could complicate low-altitude operations by adversaries, including helicopter-borne or precision-strike missions.

#### Context: War Damage and Urgency

The agreement follows Iran's formal request for the systems in July, shortly after the United States intervened in the 12-day war between Iran and Israel, conducting strikes

### The Verba System: Capabilities and Strategic Implications





against three Iranian nuclear facilities. According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli operations were designed to “peel the layers of protection” shielding Iran’s nuclear and military infrastructure. The campaign reportedly neutralised the bulk of Iran’s Russian-supplied S-300 air defence systems—previously its most advanced long-range capability. The resulting vulnerability exposed significant gaps in Tehran’s layered defence network, particularly at medium and low altitudes, creating the operational space that systems such as Verba are intended to fill. Financial and Logistical Details According to reporting by the Financial Times, citing leaked Russian documentation and sources familiar with the transaction: Each 9M336 missile is priced at approximately €170,000. Launch units cost roughly €40,000 apiece. Deliveries are scheduled between 2027 and 2029. A limited number of systems may already have been transferred. Iran’s ambassador to Moscow, Kazem Jalali, appeared to allude to recent military shipments, noting on state television that long-standing defence agreements with Russia were now being implemented. Strategic Timing: US Pressure and Regional Escalation The deal has surfaced amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington. US President Donald Trump has publicly contemplated a “limited” strike on Iran, while overseeing what analysts describe as the

largest American military build-up in the Middle East since the 2003 Iraq War. In this context, the Russia–Iran agreement serves multiple strategic functions: Deterrence Enhancement – Strengthening Iran’s ability to contest low-altitude air operations. Political Signalling – Demonstrating continued Russian support despite Moscow’s refusal to intervene directly during the recent conflict. Relationship Repair – Reinforcing bilateral ties after perceptions in Tehran that Russia remained passive during a moment of crisis. A former senior US official observed that the Kremlin likely views the transfer as a means of preserving Iran as a long-term strategic partner, compensating for its earlier restraint.

**Broader Military Cooperation**

The Verba deal appears to be part of a wider defence alignment. Iran reportedly acquired up to six Russian Mi-28 attack helicopters earlier this year and continues negotiations for two squadrons of Sukhoi Su-35 fighter aircraft.

Taken together, these developments signal a measured but deliberate effort by Tehran to rebuild its conventional deterrent capacity and reduce exposure to future precision air campaigns.

**Conclusion**

Far from a routine arms sale, the Russia–Iran Verba agreement reflects a strategic recalibration on both sides. For Tehran, it addresses urgent vulnerabilities in low-altitude air defence exposed by recent



conflict. For Moscow, it reaffirms geopolitical alignment in a region where influence is contested and alliances are increasingly transactional.

In an environment marked by escalating rhetoric and military posturing, the transfer of advanced portable air defence systems introduces a new variable into the already fragile security architecture of the Middle East.

**ENOUGH WAR FOR TODAY: IT'S TOO MUCH IN THE NEWS AND DAMPENS THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

I asked a few questions of chatGPT!

**Will humans ever travel to the stars?**

Short answer: not with today’s technology — but maybe in the very distant future.

**Let’s break it down realistically.**

*The Big Problem: Distance*

The nearest star system is Alpha Centauri, about 4.37 light-years away.

To understand how far that is:

1 light-year ≈ 9.46 trillion km

Our fastest spacecraft (like Voyager 1) would take over 70,000 years to get there.

That’s longer than recorded human civilization.

**Could Future Technology Change That?**

Here are the main ideas scientists are exploring:

Sail Probes (Near-Term Possibility)

Breakthrough Star shot is studying tiny, laser-pushed spacecraft that could reach 20% the speed of light.

Travel time to Alpha Centauri: 20–25 years

Problem: Only tiny probes, not humans

Massive engineering challenges remain

This is the most realistic interstellar idea right now.

**Nuclear Fusion or Antimatter Ships (Far Future)**

Concepts like Project Daedalus proposed fusion-powered starships.

Could reach 5–10% light speed

Travel time: 40–100 years

Requires technology we don’t yet have

Antimatter would be even more powerful — but we currently produce it in tiny, impractical amounts.

**Generation Ships**

Massive spacecraft where:

Multiple generations live and die during the journey

Travel time: hundreds to thousands of years

Biggest challenges:

Closed ecosystems

Social stability

Radiation protection

Enormous cost

**Warp Drives or Wormholes (Purely Theoretical)**

*The Alcubierre drive suggests bending space-time.*

Problems:

Requires “negative energy” (not known to exist in usable amounts)

May violate fundamental physics

Currently science fiction

The Realistic Answer

In this century?

Almost certainly no human star travel.

In 200–500 years?

Possibly robotic probes.

In 1,000+ years?

Maybe generation ships or advanced propulsion — if civilization remains stable and motivated.

**The Bigger Question**

*Interstellar travel isn’t just a physics problem — it’s a:*

Civilization stability problem

Energy production problem

Biological survival problem

Economic motivation problem

**Will AI go to the stars before we do?**

Short answer: Almost certainly, yes.

AI (or robotic intelligence) is far more likely to reach other stars before biological humans do.

**Here’s why.**

Why AI Has Huge Advantages Over Humans

No Life Support Needed

Humans require:

Oxygen

Water

Food

Gravity (or we lose bone/muscle)

Radiation shielding

Psychological stability

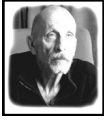
**AI systems need:**

Power

Hardware protection

That’s dramatically simpler.

Travel Time Becomes Less of a Problem



The truth is here, not out there!

# THE RAGGED-RAG

<http://ragged-rag.net>

The nearest star system, Alpha Centauri, is 4.37 light-years away.

If a probe traveled at:  
10% light speed → ~44 years  
20% light speed: 22 years  
For humans, 44 years is a lifetime-scale mission.  
For AI? It's just runtime.

### This Is Already Being Studied

The Breakthrough Starshot project aims to send tiny AI-powered probes to Alpha Centauri at ~20% light speed using laser-driven light sails.  
These wouldn't carry humans — just:  
Cameras  
Sensors

Onboard computing  
Autonomous decision systems  
In other words: proto-AI explorers.  
AI Is Better Suited for Interstellar Missions

### AI systems could:

Hibernate for decades  
Repair themselves (with advanced robotics)  
Operate in extreme radiation  
Make decisions without Earth  
Replicate using local materials (theoretical, but plausible)  
Some researchers even speculate about self-replicating probes — often called Von Neumann probes — that spread from star to star autonomously.

### A Realistic Scenario

We send AI probes first.  
They map habitable planets.  
They prepare infrastructure.  
Humans follow centuries later — if ever.  
In this sense, AI could become humanity's scouts."

### The Deeper Question

There's an interesting possibility:  
By the time we can reach other stars, we may no longer be purely biological.  
If humans merge with advanced AI (brain-computer interfaces, digital consciousness), the distinction between "AI" and "us" may blur.  
At that point, AI going to the stars is humanity going to the stars.

based on - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/future/article/20260226-how-ai-can-read-your-thoughts>

By Laurie Clarke

### Can AI Read Your Brain?

For decades, the brain's crackling electrical signals were too complex to decode. Now artificial intelligence is changing that.  
In 2025, researchers at Stanford helped a woman paralysed by stroke see her thoughts appear as text on a screen. A tiny array of electrodes implanted in her brain recorded neural activity as she imagined speaking. AI software translated those signals into real-time sentences. She was part of a wider effort to help people with severe paralysis or ALS communicate again — bringing scientists closer than ever to practical "mind reading." Brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) have existed for decades, but recent advances in machine learning have dramatically improved their performance. Algorithms can now recognise patterns in neural activity linked to speech, allowing patients to produce text at increasing speeds and accuracy. Some systems have moved beyond decoding attempted speech to detecting "inner speech" — the silent words we say in our heads — though accuracy remains limited.



Researchers are also beginning to capture the subtler elements of communication, such as tone, pitch and rhythm, making synthetic speech sound more natural and expressive. As devices improve and record from more neurons, experts expect clearer, faster, real-time communication.  
Beyond language, AI is helping scientists reconstruct images — and even basic

music — from brain scans. These breakthroughs are offering new insight into how the brain processes what we see and hear. For now, the technology is focused on restoring communication for those who have lost it. In time, it could reshape how humans interact with machines — and perhaps even with one another.

## A BIT OF ENTERTAINMENT

### PEAKY BLINDERS

For those of you reading this who thought this was a blinding series (excuse the pun), you have only a short time to wait until you can re-enter the Peaky Blinder Universe.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia  
Peaky Blinders:

#### The Immortal Man

The Immortal Man is an upcoming British crime drama film directed by Tom Harper and written by Steven Knight.

The film is scheduled to be released in select cinemas on 6 March 2026, and on Netflix on 20 March 2026.

#### Premise

Birmingham, 1940. Amidst the chaos of World War II, Tommy Shelby is driven back from a self-imposed exile to face his most destructive reckoning yet. With the future of the family and the country at stake, Tommy must face his own demons, and choose whether to confront his legacy, or burn it to the ground.



White mates in 4

