

Scott Ritter: Russia UNMASKS Desperate CIA Plot as Iran HAMMERS US Navy

Former US Marine Corps Intelligence Officer Scott Ritter discusses the mysterious fall out from the CIA's rushed visit to Moscow as Iran lands a major blow on the US Navy no one is talking about. Support Scott's work: <https://scottritter.substack.com/> PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iranwar #iran #trump #russia

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. Danny Haiphong here. As you can see, I am joined by Scott Ritter, a former U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer and former U.N. weapons inspector, current geopolitical analyst, journalist, and author, to go over the latest developments. Scott, I wanted to first ask you about this. There have been a flurry of reports about CIA Director Ratcliffe's visit to Russia. In the mainstream media, Trump and Russia all have different things to say about it. The mainstream media has talked about it as a warning that was sent by the president through Ratcliffe to Russia about things like—here is what Politico said—warn against attacks on NATO allies, helping Iran through the D-Day sanctions, and consequences if it were to do that.

CNBC said the same thing about this trip, which is still shrouded in mystery. Donald Trump says that it was semi-routine and that both sides just wanted an end to the war, and that's why they were talking. Russia has said very little about what actually the details were behind this. But you've talked a lot about the CIA being an agent of plotting against Russia over the years and in its history. What do you have to say about this notion that the CIA is sending threatening messages through a C-17 flight into Russia? And what exactly does this actually say about the state of the Trump administration in its wars, given that they're connecting both the Iran war and the Ukraine conflict? It seems all in one kind of package. At least that's how the mainstream media is talking about it. Your thoughts?

#Scott Ritter

Well, first of all, remember, the mainstream media doesn't have any sources. It's all speculation. They're not getting a statement from the president. They're not getting a statement from the Kremlin. So they're just making a lot of it. It's derived from things that are linked to, for instance, Michael Weiss, who's a social media analyst who speculated that this could be a warning. That seemed to be—that resonates. Now, you've got a lot of people echoing that around, that this is a

warning, a warning, a warning. The CIA is in no position to give a warning to Russia. First of all, that's not their job. Their job would be to brief Russia, and that's what we saw, for instance, in 2021. And we have to remember that this didn't come out of the blue.

There has been a CIA-SVR connectivity for some time now. They maintain open lines of communication. In 2021, we saw William Burns, a man who was director of the CIA, but as a State Department official, developed a reputation for what they call the back channel. That is to go outside normal channels to engage in conversations and stuff. And Burns met with Naryshkin and Patrushev in Moscow. And he said, "We have intelligence that suggests you're getting ready to attack—invalidate Ukraine, and we just want to let you know that we know what you're doing." There was no threat because he's in no position to threaten. That's not his job. The threats are made by the secretary of state.

The threats are made by the president, but not by a director of the CIA. Nobody would believe a threat coming from the director of the CIA, and that would terminate instantaneously the line of communication, which they don't want to terminate. So the CIA has never made a threat to Russia, and they've never vocalized a threat to Russia. They just simply informed the Russians that we're aware of what you're doing. They did that again, I guess, in November of 2022, or maybe somewhere around there, when Burns met in Istanbul with Naryshkin. And he said, "We hear that you might be planning on using nuclear weapons against Ukraine."

We want to let you know that we're aware of this and take action accordingly. My dogs are apparently upset about the Naryshkin meeting with Burns, too. But when Burns left, when Biden went away and Trump came in, the Russians made it be known that they want to continue the lines of connectivity with Trump, with Ratcliffe. And indeed, there's been several phone calls between the two. But they haven't physically met. So the idea that this meeting was out of the blue—it's so weird for a CIA guy to be meeting with Naryshkin. No. It's part of an existing pattern of behavior that—God, why do the Amazon delivery people have to come right when I'm in the middle of a podcast?

#Danny

Of course. Deliveries always come at the worst time. I get the same thing with food delivery.

#Scott Ritter

And now my dogs will never shut up because they can't see outside the door. They just know somebody was there, and they will continue to bark until they figure out that nothing's there, which may be never. Anyways, welcome to a life with dogs. And for all the people who say, "Put the dogs outside," pound sand. That will never happen. So anyways, back to this. So first of all, the CIA director's in no position to issue a threat. That's not his job. That's not his role, and it's not credible. The CIA doesn't have the ability—just so people understand—the CIA doesn't get to wake up in the morning and say, "I'm going to Moscow. I'm going to Moscow." They have to call the Russians and

say, "I'd like to come to Moscow." And the Russians will say something like, "Why do you want to come to Moscow?"

And the CIA has to say something like, "Well, we'd really like to touch upon A, B, and C." And the Russians will say, "Okay." Because, you know, when he gets there, they sort of have to know what they're talking about. Now, what we do know is that, you know, Ratcliffe flew from Washington, D. C., where he had a preliminary meeting with the president, the secretary of defense, and others. And then he flew to Riga. Whether that Riga meeting had something to do with anything, I don't believe it did. I believe that what's happened is totally separate from NATO, totally separate from NATO. I'll get into that in a minute. But he caught a C-17, which is a special mission aircraft. The C-17 that flew into Moscow is an aircraft that actually originated at Andrews Air Force Base.

It's a special mission aircraft, specially painted, special markings, special communications. And it's routinely used by principals. I guess we can say this: the CIA and others, they have things called the Silver Bullet. These are special units that are rolled in and out. They're office structures that are secure, meaning you can have secure communications, secure conversations. And so the Silver Bullet was loaded inside, which means that Burns is able to maintain secure connectivity with Washington, D.C. through encrypted communications. So this is why the C-17 was picked. It's a special mission aircraft, specifically configured for high-profile travel by senior government officials. But the C-17 has to get clearance into Russia. That means that it's not just the C-17, but the type.

They have to explain the type because the Russians aren't going to, for instance, let an RC-135 penetrate Russian airspace. And so the Russians knew that this was happening. This was cleared, a cleared flight. It landed in Vnukovo. The idea that just, hey, we're a C-17 with the CIA director showing up in Vnukovo. You have to let us land. No, no, no, no, guys. This was all pre-cleared. Please understand that. And the Russians, if the CIA called up and said, "We want to come in and issue a threat," the Russians would say, "Don't bother. Stay home." Please understand that the Russians aren't in the business of receiving threats from a director of the CIA. And the CIA director would have to give the Russians an inkling of what he wanted to talk about so that they're prepared.

And so this notion of a threat is just absurd, and it's sort of embarrassing for anybody who pretends to say they know anything about Russia to say that that's what was happening. Because if it was, that means that the director lied to them and said, "Hey, I want to come in and talk about, you know, Putin's nose-picking habits." "All right, we'll talk about that." Then he lands and says, "I'm threatening you," the Russians would say, "Get the F out. Go." It just wouldn't be the shortest conversation in the history of short conversations. So Radcliffe went with a purpose. Now, what's interesting is nobody's talking about it. The Russians aren't talking about it. The White House isn't really talking about it, except to say some interesting things.

He said, Trump said, you all will be disappointed by your speculation about a threat, about war with NATO, about all this stuff. He said it's sort of routine. That's an important word, routine. What do we know that Russia and the United States have been talking about for a long time? Iran's nuclear

program. Russia has been working overtime to find a solution to America's paranoia about Iran's program. Russia has offered to take the 60% enriched uranium. Russia has offered to do a number of things. And so here we have a situation where Donald Trump has a problem with Iran. Two things: the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear program. Iran cannot have a nuclear bomb, he said. And you can't bring it into this conflict by doing nothing about Iran's nuclear program. There has to be movement someplace.

And the Iranians know this, and the Russians know this. And so what happened today, the day after Ratcliffe's visit? Russia and Iran inked a \$25 billion nuclear agreement. Russia and Iran inked a \$25 billion nuclear agreement, which means that Russia is building nuclear power plants in Iran. What's important about this is this comes a day or two after the Secretary of Commerce, I believe, came out and said, "We have no opposition to Iran having a peaceful nuclear program, nuclear power, none whatsoever. They just can't have a nuclear weapons program." That's an interesting statement. Sort of came out of the blue. "We have no—we support Iran having a nuclear power program." Okay. But that was a nuclear power program predicated on Iran having a robust nuclear enrichment program.

Russia has now inked a deal where Russia is going to be providing nuclear plants and the fuel. Now, there may be a component to this that gives Iran a residual enrichment capacity where they can blend in some of their enriched fuel into the fuel rods, but the fuel rods will be controlled by Russia. So whatever enrichment takes place leaves Iran, gets processed—I'm speculating now because I haven't seen the actual document. But what I think happened here is that Trump said to the Russians, "We have to end this conflict, and I need a way out." He didn't maybe put it that way, but the implication is we're looking for a way out. We would be willing to accept a deal that did A, B, C, D, and E. We understand you're negotiating with the Iranians. Let's talk about the parameters. And he sat down with Naryshkin, and Naryshkin said, "This is what we have."

Maybe they brought in some guys, but this is what the CIA could talk about. This is the kind of thing the CIA has been working with Russia on for some time: controlling Iran's nuclear program. I think that that's the core of what they talked about. And I think that if Russia follows through on getting Trump extricated from Iran successfully, which means politically successfully, that Trump is saying, "We can help Iran bring an end to the Ukrainian conflict too." I don't think there's a direct quid pro quo, because I think it's in Russia's interest to do what they're doing. Russia has always been somebody who is opposed to Iran's unlimited enrichment program. So, you know, this is in their interest.

But I think, too, there's, you know, that Radcliffe is in possession of certain knowledge. What kind of knowledge, for instance? Radcliffe and the CIA have been directly involved in Ukraine's drone programs, the acquisition of drones and the employment of drones. We know this because the CIA collaborated with The New York Times to do a major article that was published in December of 2025, I believe, about just that: how the CIA has been involved in the targeting of Ukrainian drones

against Russian energy infrastructure. That article came out at the same time that Ukraine launched 98 drones against the Valdai residence of Vladimir Putin while he was at residence on the phone with Donald Trump.

An assassination attempt, in other words. And the Russians know this because they captured almost intact several of these FP-1 drones. They took the guidance chips where all the guidance information is programmed in. And just people have to understand that there's... to make things go up and down and all around, the data is organized in a certain way. There's certain algorithms that are programmed in, that are done in certain places. Let's call it Wiesbaden, done by certain people. We'll call it the U.S. Army. And there's certain signatures attached that, when you unpackage that, it says that we have information about a radar here that you have to fly around. You have to fly below the horizon here.

So all the things that tell the drone what to do are linked to intelligence information that's been collected and turned into an algorithm. And the Russians had this. They already looked at it. They knew what it was. And they called in the American air attaché, and they gave it to them. They said, "Here, we know what you did." They didn't have to say that. They just said, "Here, why don't you take a look at this," which means we know what you did. And when you look at this, you'll know that we know what you did. And so, you know, Russia is fully aware of this, that the CIA has been heavily implicated in this. But Russia also knows a couple other things, too. And now it's public that Ukraine is out of drones and out of money. Why?

Because they stole the money, \$27 billion that was supposed to be used to fund their defense for the second half of 2026. They stole it, Umerov, when he was defense minister, and spent it all on drones in the first half of 2026. Those are the drones that enabled Ukraine to do all the targeting that the CIA was doing. This was a concerted effort that the CIA backed to flood Russia with drones to achieve a certain result, and it has failed. And now the CIA director has to sit there and go, there's no money and there's no drones. And Russia won. And this is a problem for the CIA. So I think the CIA is in a position where they say, we can help throttle down the drone program because we're in control of that. So in exchange for you helping us get out of Iran, we can help throttle down. It's not going to be one of these, you know, we're going to betray Ukraine.

#Danny

That's not how the United States operates, and that's not how these deals are made.

#Scott Ritter

But throttling down the drone program creates problems for Ukraine, and it leads to Ukraine being compelled to make certain concessions when it comes to negotiations. So it's an indirect approach. I think this is exactly what happened when Ratcliffe went to Moscow. The fact is, I'd actually put money on it.

#Danny

Well, I think, you know, that's actually looking at the facts that we have at hand. And one of those facts too, Scott, about the drones—I mean, the United States said Ukraine stopped firing drones at Russia, in Russian territory, Moscow area. Wow, this is happening. And Ukraine said, "Okay, okay, boss." Like, that's—that. I mean, that could very well—that is how it works. Yeah. It's 100% how it works. 100% how it works. And there's also another development, Scott. You know, I'm wondering how much does the bad news coming out of the Iran war also push Trump to try to get some kind of off-ramp with Russia's help, knowing that there's certainly very few options for the Trump administration right now, given that, I don't know if you caught the news, but Iran and Oman did come to a preliminary agreement on how to administer the Strait of Hormuz.

And one of the outcomes of that immediately was the closure of the so-called Omani corridor, which the United States was trying to, I don't know, air escort, naval escort out of the strait. And since that time, in the last 24 to 36 hours, zero ships at all have been coming out of the strait. And there have been several tankers hit by Iran trying to use now the closed corridor with no response from the United States, no, you know, no quibbling or anything from Oman or the U.S. or anyone in that area about it. So your thoughts on this, because the news is getting worse and worse. The oil situation is not good. The strategic reserves, the diesel season is coming, you know, September to December, where there's going to be a lot of commercial activity around the holidays, and it's getting really bad. And some Republican advisors are saying they're just trying to hang on until the midterms.

#Scott Ritter

I'm sorry. I just read one of your comments: the more I talk, the stupider I look. Thanks. Sorry.

#Danny

I'm in a good mood today.

#Scott Ritter

A lot of people would agree with you. So it is what it is. Look, again, we have to put things in perspective. Scott Bessent got up and gave a speech about the economic isolation of Iran. That is now the new strategy. So basically, the United States has walked away from seeking a military solution to the Strait of Hormuz because there is no military solution to the Strait of Hormuz. If the United States was in control of the Strait of Hormuz, then we wouldn't have to have Scott Bessent stand up and make a fool out of himself. He would just say, "We're in control."

We've got this under control. We don't. And that's reflective of the fact that Oman and Iran have this interim deal that basically removes American influence over shipping going through the Strait of Hormuz. But Bessent was about the isolation of Iran. But the curious thing about Bessent was that

at the end of the day, after everything he said, when asked, "Well, what are you doing against Iran?" Nothing. It's just a warning. "Oh, okay. And what about secondary sanctions? How are you going to do that?" "We're not, because that would collapse the global economy."

#Danny

Hmm.

#Scott Ritter

So why do you have Bessent stand up and make a statement like this, which was basically saying nothing? Because timing. Now we back up even further. The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, who happens to be their lead negotiator, traveled to Iraq last week, I believe, or, yeah, I think last week, and said—when he arrived, he said something very curious. It caught my attention. He said that we know that the United States is looking for an elegant, face-saving way out of this conflict.

#Danny

Hmm.

#Scott Ritter

So Iran recognizes that the United States is trying to leave, and it needs to be elegant and it needs to save face. So how do we do that? The big two sticking problems are Strait of Hormuz and nuclear. We now have a situation where the Strait of Hormuz may be opened. The United States is not doing anything, as you said. Remember, Iran doesn't have to convince the American people of anything. First of all, the American people won't believe anything the Iranians say, no matter what. It's Trump that has to convince the American people. And he doesn't have to convince the American people by telling the truth. He just has to create perception. Perception creates its own reality.

The vast majority of the American people are dumber than dirt about the world we live in. They don't know anything about the Strait of Hormuz. They don't know anything about the fine details. They just know about oil flowing through and gas prices going down. Please understand that that's literally the simplistic approach the American people take. So if President Trump can say, because of me, oil is increasing its flow through the Strait of Hormuz, and you're seeing a direct impact at the pump, price of gas is lowering, the idiots that populate the United States of America will say, "Wow, Donnie, thank you. You solved all our problems." And Donnie can say it's only because Scott Bessent stood up and threatened them with the economic hammer.

That's why Iran did this. And now we have an elegant face-saving mechanism out of the problem that Trump created. And I think that's the direction we're heading here. All Trump needs is for oil to flow through the Strait of Hormuz and gas prices to go down. And then he just has to tell the

American people he's responsible. Enter Scott Bessent and his ridiculous stage performance. And he now has something that he can sell the American people in the upcoming electoral cycle. And the American people aren't smart. They're not. Half of them couldn't point out the Strait of Hormuz on a map, let alone get into the complexities of an Omani-controlled corridor and an Iranian-controlled corridor and what all that means.

They just want to know, is oil flowing and is the price of gas going down? That's it. And right now we have the potential for such a scenario to be played out. And it won't require the United States to reverse course because we actually haven't done anything. It just requires Donald Trump to declare victory, which is an elegant face-saving mechanism. And you combine that with the Russian nuclear deal with Iran, you now solve the Strait of Hormuz and you solve the nuclear program in one fell swoop. So this is what I think is going on right now. You know, it's hard to say because, again, we're talking about Donald Trump. We're talking about the Trump administration. But I do think that we basically have to recognize that even though Trump is emotionally unstable, the one thing he cares about is the legacy of Donald Trump, the legacy of the Trump family.

And he knows that it is at risk. I mean, Hakeem Jeffries just came out and basically said, "We win the midterms, and we are going to go after every member of the Trump administration hard." So they know this. This is an existential struggle for Trump and his supporters. They have to win the midterm elections. And I think that he's not going to mess around. He's not going to sit here and play stupid games because he already did that and he lost. He needs oil prices to go down. He needs, you know, the perception of an American victory. And if he can come out and say that because of me, I now have better control over the Iranian nuclear program because now we've limited it to basically a Russian thing, which, by the way, parallels what we're doing with Saudi Arabia.

So it's America and Russia working together, too. And this is a serious statement I'm about to make. If the Russian deal goes through and America's deal with Saudi Arabia goes through, those are two balancing acts, both of which comply with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, both of which push the region away from the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia getting nuclear power is seen as an offset to Iran's acquisition of nuclear power. But because Iran's acquisition of nuclear power is done through the Russians and Saudi's through America, they're both controlled and they can be monitored by, you know, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the IAEA. So this actually, if it happens, is a really, really good thing.

Because you remember, just six months ago, everybody was talking about, well, Iran's going to withdraw from the NPT. When they do that, Saudi Arabia is going to, you know, demand access to nuclear weapons. And everybody's talking about massive proliferation. Here we have a scenario where both Saudi Arabia and Iran back down from weaponization, talk about nuclear power, and the nuclear power path is done via, you know, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So things are

calming down right now. I'm not going to sit here and declare victory, and I'm not going to sit here and say that we're out of the woods. But I would say that the prospects for peace are looking better and better in the region.

#Danny

Yeah, well, here is some other maybe context that might be important. So in that agreement between Iran and Oman, too, Iran laid a foundation saying that the ban that they had been talking about in such a deal of military ships, U.S. military ships in and around the strait, has basically already taken effect, with no U.S. naval vessel within 400 kilometers of the strait at all. And to your point, Scott, about the optics of, let's say, U.S. sanctions and blockade and economic war versus the reality, Iran's oil minister said that despite the blockade, they're still getting out around 1.2 million barrels of Iranian oil per day to China and their refiners. And then there's this news that I think is really important, came out today.

I know you just wrote about how the U.S. is the weakest link in the European theater, but also there's so much concern, and it's all coming out from all of the defense think tanks, the entirety of the foreign policy establishment. It's out of alarm because these shortages that we've been speaking about for so many months are getting so bad that South Korea, Japan, the Chinese province of Taiwan that the United States loves to arm to the teeth against China are all looking at years-and-years-long backlogs because of the shortages of the Iran war. So maybe if you want to talk about some of these contextual factors that might be pushing the United States, not because Trump is a peace lover and not because the United States foreign policy establishment wants to get away from the business of war, but simply because there's a context here that might be inescapable. Your thoughts on this?

#Scott Ritter

Well, it's curious. I think Mr. Colby, who's a deputy defense secretary, he's the man who has been linked to the new nuclear posture review, which has lowered the threshold for the use of American tactical nuclear weapons in certain scenarios. And one of the reasons for this is that the United States has run out of the ability to project power in a meaningful fashion using conventional weapons, weapons we exhausted our supply of as a result of the Iran war. This means, for instance, in Europe—let's talk about Europe first—Colby said the United States is supporting what's called NATO 3.0, which is basically turning NATO over to the Europeans, and that the United States is going to be looking at a massive withdrawal of troops from Europe to the Western Hemisphere.

He basically said that our priority is the Western Hemisphere. While we still care about Europe, we think Europe would be better off under NATO 3.0, which allows us to divert resources back to the United States. And so this automatically—well, this alleviates this problem because if you have America withdrawing, then we don't have to worry about America's ability to project power in Europe, which right now is nil, zero, squat. We got nothing. I just wrote about it, guys. It's

embarrassing how weak we are in Europe. We're just pathetic. But at least now we're going to stop being pathetic by just withdrawing. But now we go to the Pacific, because one of the things Colby said is that we're focused on the Western Hemisphere and the first island chain.

Now, people should probably take a look at the first island chain, what it is. It's a string of islands. That's the article I wrote on. But it's the string of islands that connect from the Aleutians down through Japan, through Hokkaido down. You know, follow it down and you go through the Philippines and down to... It's basically, we're saying that this is the limit. This is where we block China's expansion into the Pacific. It's absurd because China operates on the other side of the first island chain. China's, I think, operating—I don't know, what do they call that, the South China Sea? Is that the second island chain, the third island chain? Who knows what they call it, but it's a different island chain. China's already outside of the first island chain.

We haven't contained them at all. But there it is. So the first island chain—you see that in the second island chain. But I guess the South China Sea is still within the first island chain. But China is operating in the space between the first island chain and the second island chain. You know, we already have problems, but this is our goal: to keep China contained within the first island chain. But to do that, we have to be able to manifest what we said needed to be done in the National Security Strategy document that was published in November of 2025, that said that we have to have conventional power overmatch with China. That's the words they used: overmatch. That means we're so superior to China with conventional power that they'll never stand up to us. They'll always back down.

We will deter. It's not about nuclear weapons. Well, now we know it's about nuclear weapons because we don't have any conventional weapons. We've got nothing. Zero. We stripped it all away. It's not just about our arsenals that have been stripped bare. We took away the air defense weapons from South Korea and Japan, the THAAD that we deployed to South Korea with great fanfare, because it was part of our determination to hold North Korea at bay, and to hell with the Chinese and what they think. And then the PAC-3s in Japan, we put those in there, and we guaranteed the Japanese that we will defend them. And we also told the Japanese, we'll give you 400 Tomahawk missiles so that you can strike North Korea back if they ever dare attack you. The Japanese are like, oh, cool.

And in South Korea and Japan, like, can we play nuclear big boy too? We said, sure, we'll bring you in on the nuclear weapons planning and all that stuff. So if there's a nuclear war, you can sit at the big table, look at the big board, and feel bigly impressed. And they all went, wow, we're really secure. We're safe. We're so happy. And then in the middle of the Iran war, we went in and stripped away THAAD. We stripped away PAC-3 and told the Japanese to pound sand on the Tomahawks. They're never going to see them. And suddenly the South Koreans and Japanese are bare naked. They got nothing, which is problematic. Well, then we can further do this. The South Koreans have been working on a big military exercise with the United States. It's an annual exercise. It's a big one.

And the United States have told the South Koreans that we really have to pay attention to North Korea and the threat from North Korea because North Korea sent tens of thousands of troops off to fight against Ukraine. And they learned Western-style warfare, which we ourselves aren't perfected on. And now they've come back, and so they're going to introduce Western-style warfare into the Korean Peninsula. And the South Koreans went, "Whoa, we're really frightened by this. Help us out." We said, "Don't worry, we're going to have an exercise where this is what we focus on." We've done this whole exercise so that we're focusing on how to respond to North Korean, you know, Western-style warfare. Oh yeah, the day before the exercise was to begin, the President of the United States, unilaterally, said, "No, we're going to significantly reduce our participation in this exercise."

What signals does that send to South Korea? Because now this exercise that's about responding to North Korea's increased capabilities is gone. North Korea, meanwhile, has sent a brigade of ballistic missile launchers to Russia, and they are currently launching ballistic missiles into Ukraine as we speak. So they're getting combat experience in the employment of ballistic missiles. That'll help them in any potential conflict, too. So this is the reality. The United States has no weapons. Now, imagine being Taiwan. And you've been told that America is there to protect you, and America will always protect you. And we're there. Don't worry about it. And now waking up to the reality that America can't protect you, that America doesn't have any capacity to protect you.

This is problematic, too. And so this is the reality of the situation where the United States has literally lost all capacity to wage conventional warfare because we exhausted ourselves, and we're not going to recover again. And the only way that we continue to be able to project any meaningful military appearance is to tell the Chinese that while we don't have conventional overmatch against you, if you attack us or we get engaged, understand we will go nuclear early. Straight up. Start it off: nuclear weapons. Do we really want to live in that world? I mean, imagine being in Japan because, I mean, Danny, I'd like to know your opinion on this, but I don't think China will ever use a nuclear weapon against Taiwan. Why? Because Taiwan's China.

Please understand that the Chinese view Taiwan as China. So China's not going to nuke itself. It isn't going to happen. Nor are they going to destroy Taiwan. They're not in the business of destroying themselves. So if the United States goes nuclear, guess who's going to get nuked? Japan. Now imagine the Japanese sitting there going, "Wait a minute, what? You're going to do what? Use nuclear weapons against China, and what? They're going to nuke us." Not Taiwan, Japan. Japan's going to get nuked. So this changes everything. It changes the fundamental understanding. And now we have to talk about Europe for a second.

Because I'd be interested to know what signals the United States is giving Great Britain and Europe and NATO about the expanded drone campaign. Because if the CIA is saying we're going to reduce our—we have the potential of reducing our involvement with Ukrainian drone operations—and you have the British saying, well, we're going to fill that vacuum. Now you had Maria Zakharova come out yesterday and say, yeah, well, say goodbye to Britain. If you guys do this, understand that we will take out your defense industry capabilities involved in this, those in Ukraine and elsewhere. And

they're dead serious about this. The Russians just aren't playing anymore. So now, is Andy Burnham going to commit suicide?

And there's a lot of people thinking that if they do this, the United States will back Europe. And rather than a threat, I think one of the things that the director told Naryshkin is, "We will do everything in our power to stop the escalation of the drone war." So I think you're going to see a lot of behind-the-scenes activity by the United States. Burnham thinks he's going to fly over, talk to Donald Trump about getting a green light from America to give technology to Ukraine to build SCALP missiles, the Storm Shadow, indigenously. They're making movement in that direction. It would be interesting to see what the United States says about this, what the Trump administration says about this.

They really do need to shut it down. Scott Ritter doesn't know what happened during the Chinese Civil War. What? How do you know that? I mean, how do they know what I know? Danny, I'm just curious. I mean, it's not like I have a library of books downstairs about the Chinese Civil War. I haven't been following that issue at all. I don't know who Chiang Kai-shek is. Nothing about that. I don't know about Mao's Long March. What the hell would I know about this stuff? Nothing. I'm sorry. I just saw that comment, and I'm in a good mood, so I'm just like, okay, I know nothing. I'm a stupid person who gets everything wrong, who knows nothing about the Chinese Civil War.

#Danny

Brutal. Um, no, I was going to say, uh, who, you know, of course there's always someone in the audience, uh, that, um, that loves me to go to those places. Yeah. You know, uh, rage baiting is a real thing online, unfortunately, in these spaces. But, uh, to your thoughts about Japan and the situation there, I know very well many people who tell me in China, people with family in China, they say that there is a heavy sentiment of Japan is the one looking like they want to be out front. They're doing the U.S.'s dirty work. It's almost like they're asking for, if there's a war to break out, that Japan will be the one that's hit. Whether that's nuclear weapons, of course, we don't know. There is a sentiment, not only because there's decades and decades and decades and decades of this horrific history, but there is a... Nuclear weapons, this is important, because I understand your hesitancy to talk about China nuking Japan.

#Scott Ritter

But understand this. Right now, the world has a certain deterrence philosophy that's premised on the notion that nuclear wars can't be won. Therefore, nuclear weapons can never be used. We signed a statement to that effect in February of 2022. Now, we violated that. We know that in November of 2024, the Biden administration was ready to go to nuclear war with Russia, and that they actually had a plan. As the head of plans for Strategic Command told CSIS in November, "We're ready to have a nuclear exchange with Russia that we will win." That means that the philosophy is that nuclear wars can be won. Therefore, we will use nuclear weapons.

The CIA briefed Congress there's a greater than 50% chance that there would be a nuclear war before the end of 2024. So, you know, the United States has been operating in a sort of a nuclear free-fire zone mode for a while now. Trump supposedly tampered that down. But now with Colby's talk about early use of tactical nuclear weapons, that means that somebody believes that we can use nuclear weapons and get away with it. The problem here is as follows: if nuclear wars can't be won, therefore nuclear weapons can never be used, what happens if a nuclear weapon is used? It means nuclear weapons can be used because we believe nuclear wars can be won. That means that that is the policy of the United States.

Now, if every other nation maintains a policy of nuclear wars can't be won, therefore nuclear weapons can never be used, you understand they're in an inferior position at that point in time. Neither Russia nor China will allow this kind of imbalance of nuclear posture to exist. So if the United States were to use a nuclear weapon against China, it's a 100% guarantee in my mind that Japan will be struck by a nuclear weapon. That's what I mean by that. That's why I don't mean that China is looking to lead with a nuclear attack. But if the U.S. unleashes the nuclear genie, Japan disappears. And Japan needs to know that. Japan, after all, is the enemy state legally. And what they're doing is a violation of their obligations under the United Nations Charter. They're not allowed to remilitarize. People should understand that.

And so Japan is not the victim here. They're the aggressor. Same thing with Germany. Germany is an enemy state classified as such by the United Nations Charter, and they're not allowed to remilitarize. And so when Merz talks about building a 400,000-man army, the strongest army in Europe, and marching, you know, to march on the east towards Russia, that automatically allows Russia to attack Germany without—because that's what the United Nations Charter says. Any defeated state that seeks to remilitarize and repeat the mistakes of the past can be attacked at any time by one of the victorious states without getting permission of the Security Council. That's where we stand today. So Japan and Germany need to sort of watch out what they're doing because they are really, really playing with fire here.

#Danny

And isn't it interesting that both of those countries are maybe the two most subservient when it comes to those forces you're talking about who are flirting with not just war, but nuclear war? That's in Washington. I mean, that's the reality. That's a very sad reality. And yes, I agree, Scott. And I think, you know, despite China having a no-first-use policy, no-first-use policy goes out the window when there's a use of nuclear weapons. And there is a heavy sentiment—this is an important context to the heavy sentiment—in China that, you know, Japan is going down the path of where Japan was not too long ago with China, which is active aggressor, ready to make a really stupid move because China is—this isn't 1930, '35, '40, '45 anymore.

Make a really stupid move to go to war with China on behalf of those in Washington who want to see that. So it's really dangerous. And yeah, I think Japan is really on the front lines there because it is also the country that's probably the least likely to back down, given how many years now. And this is what a lot of people in China complain about, and what a lot of Chinese complain about, is there's a lot of anti-China sentiment in Japan. There still is. And it has only gotten worse since this push to remilitarize because it's all been geared around targeting China. And that's their elites' problem that they've created. But it has a big effect all across that country.

Yeah, we're looking at really serious times. But to you, Scott, because I think some may underestimate this threat, given that, you know, Russia, China, that they are nuclear-armed. Yeah, there are people crazy enough in Washington to contemplate. And if there are people willing to contemplate—hell, nobody was really predicting—I guess some people claim they were predicting the Iran war was going to happen at the time that it did, but most people weren't expecting it to happen at the time that it did. And then it happened. So I guess predictions can be—or future-based analysis, as we've all found out, can be—a difficult thing to harness. But the facts still can—yeah, but if the facts are there to even just indicate a possibility, then it's a possibility. But your thoughts?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, I, you know, here's the thing. It is the duty and responsibility of analysts to play Cassandra, play the role of Cassandra. That's a reference to the Odyssey. But, you know, Cassandra was, you know, the daughter of King Priam, I guess, of Troy, the sister of whoever the hell he was who got dragged around by Achilles, Hector. But she's the one who said, you know, don't go down this path. She sees Troy burning. She said, don't let the Trojan horse in and all this kind of stuff. And everybody ignored her.

You know, and we have a responsibility as analysts to, you know, collect data, assess data. And then, you know, when I was a guy who would give advice to presidents, to prime ministers, to secretary generals, to commanders in chief, and on down, you know, you don't come in with a singular. What I would do is I would brief the situation, and then I would lay out either three or five probable courses of action, and I would rate them in their likelihood of taking place. And I would explain why I did this. There would be rationale. But understand that if I'm briefing five courses of action and if I'm right on one, that means I was wrong on four.

So, you know, that's the whole problem with doing predictive analysis, is that it's very difficult to do, and there's a lot of factors that go in. The other thing about predictive analysis is you give a prediction based upon the data that exists at the time. But when you're in a situation like this where, you know, we have fluid developments, I think one can say that the threat assessment analysis done in the Pacific in February of this year differed greatly from that being done today. Because in

February, we hadn't exhausted the totality of our munition stockpiles. Today, we have. It changes everything. In February, we hadn't been defeated by Iran. Today, we have. In February, we didn't have the global energy crisis that we have today.

And so, you know, if I gave you a briefing, a very formal briefing in February, listing things like this, and I gave you a briefing today, it would be a far different briefing. Does that mean that I was lying to you in February? No, it just means that the data has changed. The situation's changed. And one of the things you do as an analyst is you constantly reevaluate the data and bounce it off of the assessments you've made to test the validity of the assessment. And you change the assessment when required. That's what a good analyst does. And you'll come up with—you'll modify your five probable courses of action. Again, if one is right, that means four are wrong. So you're going to be wrong, you know, 80% of the time. But that's the world of predictive analysis.

So I just would ask people to be patient. This is a tough thing that Danny is asking me to do, and it's a tough thing people ask Danny to do. It's a task that is not appreciated because people like to pretend that they know more than anybody else. And when you get it wrong, they say, "You got it wrong." But I don't think we're getting it wrong with malice. We're getting it wrong by trying to do a good thing. So here we have a situation today where the data set has fundamentally changed. Can we agree on that? The data set we're dealing with here today is a unique data set that wasn't viable, I don't know, even two months ago. So this means it's a fresh assessment, a fresh analysis that's going on. And it means what I'm trying to say is we have no idea what's going to happen.

None whatsoever. What we can do is look at things practically. And one of the things we look at practically is through past patterns of behavior. This is an important thing. Human beings are creatures of habit. And human beings, when they gather together in organizational structures, maintain that. And so what we can say is, even though the data set has changed, when we superimpose behavior patterns undertaken by organizations and nations, those behavior patterns tend to be consistent over time. And this is why, even though we speak of the potential of conflict, the danger of conflict right now in the Pacific, because the data sets have changed, the behavior patterns, however, would dictate that we don't have that high of a risk of combat. Look at Taiwan itself.

Taiwan itself is not a nation-state that is singularly focused on independence from China. In fact, there's a lot of dynamic going on, political dynamic in Taiwan, which is moving them in the opposite direction. The presidency, yes, is controlled by a Taiwanese nationalist. But the parliament is controlled by, gosh, what is Chiang Kai-shek's party? The Kuomintang Party. Who is Chiang Kai-shek? Was he involved in the Civil War of China? I don't know. But the Kuomintang Party is there, and they are actually sending delegations to mainland China to meet with the Chinese Communist Party to talk about how we can move forward, how Taiwan and China can move forward together to get away from this independence-minded stuff, how they can come together.

So I think there's a lot of trajectory taking place in terms of the Taiwanese-Chinese relationship that has to be factored in when you look at, for instance, things like American military support to Taiwan, the sale of weapons, et cetera. Just because if you look at the sale of weapons and the American military support, it would be suggestive that Taiwan is preparing for a war with China. I think the exact opposite is taking place, that China is actually preparing for an economic union with China that will lead to some sort of political resolution of this thing. Maybe, uh, two—you know, what is it? Uh, two flags, one nation. I don't know what they call that thing.

#Danny

Two flags, one country, two systems maybe, sort of what they have with Hong Kong. Yeah, yeah, that's how a lot of people would envision likely reunification as well. I mean, because in truth, I think despite the attempt to foster a large amount of so-called independent sentiment, separatist sentiment, there's still a big sentiment, especially around fighting war and the idea of separating by force, which is what the U.S. is really pushing toward, as being very, very, very unpopular. And yeah, the trend is still—the debate actually is more in the what does China look like, more so than what does an independent Taiwan look like, despite all of the hype around it.

But as you said, with past patterns of behavior, Scott, I think one pattern of behavior that is quite apparent, and maybe has become very apparent under the second Trump administration, is that as things get worse for U.S. power projection, hegemony, and this thing called an empire, as some have called it, there is also the tendency for those who talk about nuclear, tactical nuclear weapons, like an Elbridge Colby or the Pete Hegseths on the other side of the maybe obnoxious spectrum, they tend to take actions that might be not only counterproductive, but also quite dangerous and incredibly unpredictable, in the sense that those with rational minds who might even be thinking, well, what would someone who's making foreign policy for the various interests that U.S. foreign policy serves, what would they do?

Maybe this isn't the correct trajectory, but they do it anyway, as we saw with Iran and as we've seen with the continuation of the Ukraine conflict. So your thoughts on this, because I think this also speaks to the dangers of nuclear conflict. Because while, of course, there should be no threat of actual war between the U.S. and China, given the balance of forces, then you have people who still talk about it, plan for it, and, you know, patterns of behavior. How does that influence those who actually pull the levers?

#Scott Ritter

Well, what's interesting—this is purely anecdotal here. First of all, we have to acknowledge that the Chinese have been very reticent about engaging in arms control, nuclear arms control discussions with the United States, with Russia, with anybody. They've always felt that they had a small nuclear weapons program that was purely for deterrence. They had a no-first-use policy, and they weren't

one of the ones building tens of thousands of nuclear weapons like Russia and the United States. So they were always happy to let Russia and the United States solve this issue on their own and reduce.

But now we have a situation where the United States did threaten China with the potential of a preemptive nuclear strike that would, that would remove their strategic nuclear deterrence, make China sort of a hostage to American nuclear threats. And so China modernized the DF-41, you know, 300 or so silos, 100 missiles cycling through, multiple warheads, submarine-launched missiles, new bombers. And suddenly the game has changed. And we have the United States—one of the reasons why the United States withdrew from the last remaining arms control treaty, New START, was that the United States was looking at an imbalance of power.

Even though China says that their nuclear program is independent of Russia, I don't think we can discount the perception, if not the reality, of the bear-dragon or the dragon-bear, depending on how you want to define it, the unity of Russian and Chinese strategic interests. We saw that first manifested in a real way, I guess, in February of 2022, when Putin went to China on the eve of the Beijing Winter Olympics, and they issued a 5,000-word statement that basically said, "We oppose the rules-based international order, we oppose American hegemony, and we'll be promoting multipolarity." You know, that was defined.

There isn't a military alliance, but we know the Russians and the Chinese have undertaken major military exercises under unified command, in that there is an effort to get the doctrine of Russia to conform with the doctrine of China. So if they ever had to fight a joint war, they had a joint warfighting doctrine. It's sort of like what NATO does or did. And so, you know, there is this aspect of jointness between Russia and China. And the reason why I bring this up is I recently had an opportunity to interface with, you know, representatives of the Chinese Defense Attaché Office in Washington, D.C., and we had conversations, and those conversations touched upon arms control.

And I thought the second it was raised that they would become reticent and standoffish. Just the opposite. They indicated that this was an issue they were extremely interested in. And while there was nothing that firmly came out of it, the sense was that this was a topic that they thought could be explored in conferences in Beijing and through further discussion, which is curious because that's the exact opposite trajectory China seemed to be headed on. But I think we're in a situation today where China recognizes that there's a new reality here: that the lack of arms control agreements is actually leading to an escalation of, you know, nuclear war preparations on the part of the United States, which will mandate a required counter-escalation on the part of China and Russia.

And that's not the trajectory China wants to be on. So I think arms control is becoming cool, meaning they're looking at how can arms control actually facilitate China's strategic interests. And this is good news because up until now, China has been very reticent about that. Now, this doesn't mean anything. This isn't official Chinese policy. This is purely anecdotal information. But the point is, that's all we have to operate on. At least that's all I have to operate on until more information becomes apparent.

But, you know, whereas the United States and Russia seem to have found no common ground to further strategic nuclear arms reduction talks, China seems to at least be open to, you know, having conversations about this topic. And that could always be the start because, you know, one of the things that's kept the United States from pursuing a traditional bilateral arms control relationship with Russia is its concern about China. And so now maybe China will find a way to get into the mix. And who knows, maybe someday we'll be talking about arms control being back on the table, which would be a really, really good thing.

#Danny

Yeah, it would be. It would be, definitely, especially with the way that Washington is going. It would be a very good thing. All right, Scott. Well, this was a great show. We have one super chat here: "Where's Congress behind this bunch of beaches?" Well, I guess you could say that about every single thing we've talked about today. I don't know what they were replying to at 2:33, but thank you so much for that. And then thank you for becoming a new member. Scott, I want to make sure everybody knows that your website, in substance, ScottRitter.com, is in the video description below so people can support you. Do you have any final words before I hit end stream here?

#Scott Ritter

No, thanks for having me. I just want to remind your audience that both you and I are independent journalists, and that means that we exist because of the support that you provide. I'm prepared to go to Russia very soon to repeat my June trip, which I think was very productive in terms of output. As an independent journalist, I can only make those trips if I receive support from people through donations. And so I would ask anybody who thinks that the work I do is worthwhile to go to the donation section on my Substack page and donate. I'm about 50% of where I need to be to make this trip 100% viable. But I would also ask that you support Danny Haiphong and the important work that he's doing too. And, you know, that's it. We independent journalists can't be independent if we have to rely on corporate support. We need to rely upon supporters like you, the people in this audience. So thanks for your past support, and hopefully we can continue to do good work together.

#Danny

Indeed. Yes, everybody, thanks so much for viewing today. You heard Scott. Do support him if you're able. There's a website up there, and in the video description below, you can find the link. Everybody, I'll be back tomorrow with Professor Richard Wolff to talk economy, global economy, geopolitics, 2 p.m. Eastern Time, same time, August 28th. All the links and the tips for this channel in the video description below. Hit the like button. That's a free way to make sure more people hear Scott, more people hear what we had to say today and our updates on the latest. Until next time, everybody, without further ado, I will see you all tomorrow, hopefully, at 2 p.m. Eastern Time, August 28th. Take care.

