

Iran HITS Tankers in US Navy, Venezuela Oil Grab BLOWS UP | KJ Noh

Iran's Navy is hitting ships left and right in the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation to Trump's assertion that all mines have been cleared and the waterway is completely open. KJ Noh discusses breaking news that Trump has entered full desperation mode via a major oil grab on Venezuela meant to offset failures in the war on Iran. Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong> SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong> Telegram: <https://t.me/DannyHaiphong> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> #iran #iranwar #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by KJ Ngo. It's been a long time. KJ, let's go over the latest developments. First, we talked—the United States declared, Trump declared, the Strait of Hormuz open, with Admiral Bradley Cooper of CENTCOM saying that all mines have been swept away and commercial shipping is now 100% free and safe. While Iran answered back big time last night, hitting an oil tanker with missiles and drones, turning back another from the UAE in this drone swarm attack. There was footage of a missile container from the anti-ship missiles washing ashore off Oman, where that Omani corridor, which is now closed, by the way, everyone, according to a new Iran-Omani deal on managing the Strait.

Despite the fact that the Trump administration says that hundreds of millions of barrels of oil have gone through the Strait of Hormuz under U.S. Navy direction, not only has Iran hit these tankers in CENTCOM's eyes, in front of their face, because they're saying they are actually controlling the Strait themselves, there's only been about five ships per day going through the Strait of Hormuz since the beginning of the war. And that has slowed to a standstill in the last week or so. Now, what hasn't come to a standstill is that China and Iran have continued their oil trade, with these teacup refineries actually moving Iranian oil through Malaysia to China at a level very close to what existed before the war.

Now, in other news, Trump has, it seems in desperation, once again, blown up and gone to Venezuela for a massive deal, quote-unquote, an oil grab that will include, according to Trump and Delcy Rodríguez, the interim president of Venezuela, 65 billion barrels, possibly, of proven reserves from Venezuela to the United States, with \$17 billion private contracting deals from various U.S. oil monopolies. Here is Delcy Rodríguez's statement saying that this is a historic agreement and that

she has her deepest gratitude for Donald Trump's participation. KJ, what do you make of these developments? This war against Iran is at a standstill. China has rejected sanctions. This has become a major global war. Trump is trying to lean on Venezuela. What do you make of everything that's going on and where we are right now?

#KJ Noh

Well, I think the invariable fact is that Iran still controls the Strait of Hormuz. It's their strait, and they get to say what happens to it. I believe that the U.S. claims that it has demined the strait and that it is open are completely without foundation. First, when you say you've demined it, how? And with which navy? The U.S. has, what, four minesweepers? They're decades old. They're made of wood. And it has a very, very limited UDT team. It would take months. People don't understand how difficult it is to demine or actually to remove any kind of unexploded ordnance.

And it's hard to believe that the U.S. could have done this so rapidly, you know, without getting counterfire and without being, you know, completely obliterated in the process. You know, it's like trying to do brain surgery underwater. I mean, it is very, very difficult stuff. And so I don't think that's credible. And I think certainly all of the trackers that are tracking transit through the Strait of Hormuz show that whatever the U.S. is saying, the facts on the ground do not prove it. It's simply the basic fact that Iran has, as I pointed out, these six basic asymmetries, but one of them is the asymmetry of geography. It controls the geography. That is an invariable fact.

The Strait of Hormuz is like a hairpin turn, and it is surrounded on all sides by the Iranians with a massive set of mountains. So essentially, it's a kill zone. Iran has the bleachers and the skyboxes, and any traffic going through that, and also any bases along the other side in UAE, Oman, etc., they're on flat alluvial plain or along a flat ocean that has to go through a hairpin turn. There's no way that the U.S. can regain control of that. And certainly to say that it has rapidly demined the area when it doesn't really have real minesweeping capacities stretches credibility, to say the least. So I would say that the Iranian assertions are probably correct. They control it. It's their strait.

And the U.S. does have to come to some kind of accommodation if it wants any future for the global economy. Regarding the Venezuelan deal, I'm going to wait to see what the actual contracts look like. Once again, I think there's a lot of hyperbole coming out. We haven't seen the contracts yet. We haven't seen exactly what they entail. Right now, we're just having large, broad statements. But, I mean, the fact is that Venezuela, and certainly President Rodriguez, has had a gun to her head. She's a technocrat and a lawyer. People say, you know, she's revolutionary. She would never give up her revolutionary ideals.

But the simple fact is that she does have a gun to her head. I think she's trying to make the best out of a very, very bad situation. And Venezuela's goal right now is to survive. It has to survive. It has to do what it can. And then perhaps it will come back and see how it will recover its status. But right now, it looks very clearly that it is semi-sovereign, which is actually the case for most of the

countries of the Global South. Most countries of the Global South, certainly quote-unquote U.S. allies in the Pacific, are all semi-sovereign. They don't have full control over their economy, their resources—in the case of Korea, not even of its own military.

So the fact that the leader was kidnapped—Maduro is kidnapped—she has a gun to her head. She's trying to manage, you know, in the absolute, the best under extraordinary circumstances. I mean, all of this is illegal. I mean, let's name it, you know, under international law, under any kind of law, contracts signed under duress are illegal and are null and void. But right now, this is the situation that she's facing. And as a technocrat and as a lawyer, I think she's trying to do the best of what is clearly a very, very challenging situation, to say the least.

#Danny

Cage, I want your assessment of: will this kind of deal solve the U.S.'s problems? It's obviously very well timed. The U.S.'s strategic reserves are going down to nil. There is already a massive economic crisis underway that we've been covering here, but it's likely to get much worse if the Strait of Hormuz situation continues as it is. And it's going to continue as it is. And I'll just pull up a little report about exactly what you said. There's reports that only 11 of the so-called mine-like objects that were swept by underwater drones, supposedly, according to Axios, were actually mines.

Some question whether any of them were mines. And to say the least, there were no personnel swimming and diving into Iranian shores off of some kind of warship. But I'm curious, KJ, whether you think, given the balance of forces of what's going on, is Venezuela, this oil deal, going to resolve the problems that the U.S. has caused to the global economic situation because of this war in Iran and everything else that the Trump administration is doing, not least tariffs, trade war with Canada? I mean, we could go on and on and on, but what do you think?

#KJ Noh

I'm not an expert in oil markets, but just from my little knowledge, I would say it's not going to change. I think this is largely a PR stunt. Whatever oil has to come online is going to take years and years to actually come into circulation, usable form. There's so much infrastructure that has to be rebuilt. It's not simply a matter of saying that we have these options on X amount of Venezuela's oil. It really takes time, and right now the crunch, the crunch is happening right now. There's already too much oil that has been taken offline.

As you point out, strategic reserves have been depleted. We are seeing pain all over the globe. And remember, once again, it's not just oil per se. It's all the hydrocarbon byproducts, helium and naphtha, everything else, which also used to transit through the Strait of Hormuz. So unless there is a magic solution to all of those chemicals—sulfur, helium, aluminum, naphtha, et cetera—we are still going to see massive, massive shocks to the global economic system.

#Danny

Yeah. And KJ, now to the big victory that the Trump administration has declared, not just in the Strait of Hormuz, but in terms of economic war on Iran. What have you made of the D-Day that wasn't? The only new sanctions that have been levied, secondarily, have been on an Egyptian bank inside of the UAE. China has not been touched. Iran has been actually mocking this economic war because they actually said that they haven't seen anything change on the ground. Why is it that the United States is boasting that its Navy and its military has, you know, opened up the strait while at the same time moving more and more toward a realm of warfare that they've been waging against Iran for quite some time? And that really hasn't changed very much other than the additional blockade that was instituted during the war.

#KJ Noh

Well, you know, sanctions are a form of siege warfare. They are warfare, and unilateral sanctions are illegal. They're a violation of international law. But generally, what the U.S. likes to do is it likes to sanction a country to near death before it goes in and invades it. In the case of Iran, the U.S. was leveraging significant sanctions, but I believe that it jumped the gun and it started attacking, and Iran was able to beat back. You know, it's like, you're supposed to harass and worry your opponent in the ring before you go in for the kill. Well, they went in too soon, and now they've been counter-choked. The counter-choke is the Strait of Hormuz.

And so the U.S. is really struggling. And so now it wants to go back to sanctions. Clearly, these sanctions have no bite. They're not going to be able to leverage them against the most important partner, which is China, because China has already said, you know, we're not going to—we're not going to abide by your sanctions. And I don't think the U.S. is going to impose secondary sanctions on China. It simply cannot. And the third thing that this is doing is, it's accelerating de-dollarization. So, if anything, the U.S. has, you know, certain, you know, core centers of power. One is its military, and now shown to be with significant restrictions and limitations.

The second is its control over the financial apparatus, in particular, reserve currency. And the third is its ability to flim-flam, propagandize, and mystify the world through its media and propaganda systems. Those are the three sources of its power on the planet. And the second one, its ability to sanction and to control the global choke points of finance. Literally, you know, there is a financial Strait of Hormuz which goes through New York City servers. When the U.S. puts out this kind of a threat, what it does is it pushes countries to de-dollarize and to move to other clearinghouse systems and to move to other currencies.

So this is actually undermining—it's undercutting one of its core sources of power. So once again, this is this inability to think critically, the inability to think about repercussions, the inability to think dialectically, the inability to see beyond the first move. This is a typical strategy under this administration. And of course, this is the idea that they think they can bluff and threaten everybody

into compliance. But once you've lost the military capacity, which is really the underpinning of the U. S. global reserve currency, once you've lost that, once you've shown that that does not have the power that it is supposed to have, then all the other threats collapse under that weakening of that foundation.

#Danny

Yeah, great points, KJ. And what definitely proves your analysis here is that a lot of many friends of ours and those who have been on this show have talked about a lot of this war being about China and isolating China, containing China, getting rid of a great ally of China. But now the Pentagon and people close to the Pentagon are very worried about what this war has done to the United States' arsenal, to the point where they might not be able to confront China. And now, of course, the neocons, the think tanks, and the rest are worried that dwindling stockpiles will embolden China and North Korea.

And this comes as Iran says that they've actually doubled their weapons production since the 12-day war up until June of this year, which means deep into the Ramadan war, as it has been called. So there is this asymmetry and divergence of fortunes, it seems like. KJ, do you feel like that explains why the war is where it is, and why you even see Donald Trump acting quite strangely, for example, around the North Korea-DPRK question too, and treating China and Russia very differently than maybe even just optically, maybe not in terms of policy, but the way that the Trump administration approaches Russia and China? There's almost a hesitancy beyond that move, just doing what every other presidency has done since before he came to office. Your thoughts on this?

#KJ Noh

Well, bullies tend to respect power. And so when you push back, when you hit back, then they back off, and then all of a sudden they may try to become conciliatory. I think that may be some of the dynamic that's happening right now. But once again, let's go back to the core asymmetries that I pointed out before with you. There's asymmetry of volition, a desire to fight. There's an asymmetry of learning curves. Iran has much faster learning curves. U.S. learning curve is flat. There's the asymmetry of geography, which we just mentioned. There's the asymmetry of cost, in particular with interceptors and, you know, drones, etc. There's asymmetry of tactics.

You know, U.S. is still relying on a decapitation approach, whereas Iran has, you know, this mosaic approach, which is—I refer to it as a starfish approach. You cannot decapitate a starfish. And then there's the asymmetry of economics, and in particular industrial systems. The U.S. thinks, or used to think, that it could simply print bullets and print rockets and interceptors the way it prints money. But that's not the case, right? We know that the U.S. builds very, very slowly these boutique interceptors, these boutique missiles, these boutique weapons. They are like hand-building Italian sports cars, whereas Iran has this massive industrial capacity.

It's just knocking out these drones that are devastating and overwhelming U.S. defenses. That is a fundamental asymmetry. It's essentially the asymmetry between a financialized capitalist rentier power and an industrial power. And these are fundamental asymmetries, that when you fight what essentially is industrial war, the country with the better industry, with industrial capacity, wins. We've seen this across, you know, centuries of war. So, I mean, I think the U.S. is belatedly coming back to that realization. Now, of course, this was not actually supposed to work out this way. As I said before, the U.S. had a three-course meal plan. The main course was China.

Russia was supposed to be the starter or the appetizer, which it would polish off because it's simply a gas station with pretensions. And Iran was supposed to be cleanup. It was supposed to be dessert. It was supposed to be the after-meal dish that it would just polish off, you know, kind of as an afterthought. That sequencing got messed up for a number of reasons, partly because of neocon ambition, same thing for Russia, actually. And because of that, it is trapped both in Europe and in Central Asia. And so this whole three-course meal is coming apart, and they really don't have quite literally the appetite or even the capacity to take on China. What is the U.S. countermeasure? Well, of course, they want to use proxies.

This is why they are arming Japan to the teeth. This is why they want to take over. This is why they don't want to return South Korea's military to its own leadership. But in particular, Japan is particularly dangerous. Right now they're doing drills with Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. But the Japanese military—a remilitarized Japan—is like ISIS with aircraft carriers. They are probably the most dangerous thing in the Pacific. And I believe that this is an action the U.S. will come to regret, that Japan was demilitarized for a reason, just like Prussia was demilitarized and essentially dismantled. So this is a very, very dangerous gamble the U.S. is taking. But once again, the U.S. is always oblivious to blowback. It never learns the lessons of history.

If you take the worst of the worst and you equip them with advanced weaponry, and you let them loose, then you should expect blowback. But the U.S. never learns this lesson. So inside this context, the U.S. is still struggling. It still has ambitions to take the war to China. There's a long article in Foreign Affairs. They said, we need to give up on the Middle East, Central Asia, Western Asia. We need to come back to our senses. We need to be more, you know, conservative in our approach. And we still need to, quote unquote, deter China, i.e., take the war to China. So they haven't changed on this, you know, main course conception. But what they are talking about, and this has come out, you know, more overtly, although Colby has been talking about this for at least 11 years now.

He wants to go nuclear. He wants to use tactical nukes. He wants to make tactical nukes a seamless part of the strategic, of the military arsenal. It's just part of the toolbox. We use nukes whenever we feel like it. So that is the real danger that we're facing right now. As for isolating China, it's not going to happen. China is already fully grown. You're not going to put China back into its box. And certainly the overtures with DPRK, largely theatrical, DPRK is not going to fall back into the U.S. camp or be seduced or do anything. They know the U.S. is not agreement-capable. They have a

mutual defense treaty with China. And now with Russia, we can see that these things are, you know, facts on the ground. They're not going to change.

#Danny

And I guess, yeah, the theatrics have actually led to results too, which is very interesting, where the Trump administration has halted a series of military exercises, a portion of them at least, with South Korea, and has said that Trump will meet Kim Jong-un before the end of the year. But this happened during the first Trump administration. Trump did meet with Kim Jong-un, and it didn't really go anywhere, actually. Not only was Trump too feckless and unable to meet any commitments, but the entire establishment used that to come down very hard on any possibility for there to be any progress on easing tensions from the United States toward North Korea, DPRK. So I think history has a bit of a guide for us here.

But how much do the struggles that the United States is having, KJ, with Iran and also with Russia—because we just had the CIA director rush his behind to Moscow, for some reason, many people can only speculate what exactly the reason is. The media says to give a stern warning to Russia, but it doesn't look like that actually happened. So how much does this have anything to do with this pivot now toward DPRK, this theatrical pivot that has led to, though, a disruption in military exercises that South Korea and the U.S. often conduct together, or at least under U.S. dominion?

#KJ Noh

Well, Danny, I would actually beg to differ. I don't think there has been much disruption. I think it's once again been largely theatrical. There was a time, for example, when I was in the military, when we would have military exercises twice a year. They would be scheduled for the spring and they would be scheduled for the fall. And they would always take place during North Korea's planting and harvesting season. Why was this the case? Well, the U.S. had a collapse doctrine towards North Korea. It was essentially going to sanction it to death. And on top of the sanctions, it was going to disrupt its food security. North Korea has a large military, but that military most of the time is actually involved in peacetime activities such as planting and harvesting.

And by forcing North Korea to take its troops away from, you know, the agricultural duties that it was doing and forcing it to man the posts, the idea was that we are going to increase food insecurity in North Korea, essentially starve it to death. And that was the idea. So, for example, in the fall, they would have, you know, exercises with 300,000 troops. I mean, this is twice the size of the D-Day invasion. I mean, from North Korea's standpoint, when it looks at that kind of vast, you know, coalition being assembled right on its doorstep, right up against its porch, it has no choice but to man all the stations and be ready for imminent war because the U.S. plan, our plan, OPLAN 5015, is actually a plan of decapitation, like we saw, for example, attempted in Iran, attempted and done in Venezuela.

You know, it's all decapitation. So North Korea always had to mobilize against this. That model has actually shifted, and it's shifted significantly since the Biden administration. And so essentially, what were two very intensive moments of mobilization for North Korea—that is, massive war games on the Korean Peninsula. And I also note that these war games are not defensive. They are aggressive. They are offensive war games. If they were truly defensive, they wouldn't be staging them at the time which is the most convenient and favorable for U.S. logistics. They would be rehearsing them in the middle of winter or in the middle of the monsoon season. They never do that. They wait until the rain has stopped.

They wait until the snow has stopped. And they always do it when it's logistically convenient for them. So these are clearly exercises in logistical staging for offensive operations. But anyway, these kind of intensive exercises would happen twice a year, and incredibly violent, incredibly destructive, incredibly, you know, stressful on troops and material and cost, et cetera. Now these exercises are pretty much nonstop all year round. So last year, Korea had 275 days of war games. The year before, it had 270 days of war games. So it's not four to six weeks like was the case before. It's literally nonstop, and it's just a kind of nonstop full-court press in preparation for war.

These exercises are so granular that they actually, for example, rehearse taking prisoners of war and transferring them. This is how granular and detailed they get. In this situation, yes, it's true there was the Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise, which happened a few weeks ago. The U.S. cut this short by one week. They cut out the second portion of the field exercises. But according to the South Korean Defense Ministry, they say that exercises are proceeding as planned. We've deferred and shifted some around. But essentially, we're going to have 159 war games, 159 war games, all of them lasting at least a few days, sometimes weeks. So the war rehearsal is nonstop on the Korean Peninsula. And we have to understand this. Korea has always been used as an on-ramp for war against China.

This has always been the case. For 500 years, when foreign powers, naval powers, have tried to assault China, it has always happened from Korea since 1592, and also from Taiwan, also around that time as well. So there are two kind of on-ramps. One is, you know, kind of forward-base Taiwan, Taiwan Island, which is right in the center of the first island chain, and then Korea, which is literally an on-ramp onto China. And so any de-escalation with North Korea, you have to take it with a pinch of salt because the U.S. has always used the North Korean threat as a pretext, as a stalking horse for aggression against China. Does North Korea pose a threat? Well, ask yourself. North Korea's military budget is about \$2 or \$3 billion. It's, what, one-fourth of the NYPD budget.

It is less than Taylor Swift's earnings, the revenue generated from Taylor Swift's most recent Eras Tour. So it is not a military threat, but it does have the capacity to defend itself. And it's shown that in spades. And every time there's a massive military exercise, it will fire missiles. And it does that because it needs to ascertain whether these military exercises are just exercises or whether they are actually an invasion. If they are an invasion, then any missiles fired would be struck with counter-battery fire. And that's how it knows whether it's a real invasion or not. So in the meantime, any

kind of putative de-escalation with North Korea, I believe, is purely theatrical. I mean, of course, I think that Trump would like to say that, you know, I've tamed, you know, the most savage, you know, whatever, you know, in the world.

But I don't think it will go anywhere. North Korea is completely uninterested. And as for the reduction in military exercises, this is actually what President Lee Jae-myung of South Korea has asked for. And so some people are saying that Trump is punishing Lee Jae-myung, but if he's punishing him, it's a strange punishment because he's giving him what he asked for. But at the same time, as I said, the total number of military exercises has not diminished: 150 war games on the Korean Peninsula scheduled for this year. And as we speak, Japan and Korea and the U.S. are right now rehearsing Freedom Edge, which is a tripartite alliance that starts on Jeju Island and is rehearsing war against China along the first island chain. I can say more about that if you're interested.

#Danny

Yeah, for sure. Well, I was going to ask you, maybe you can fit that in, now that we are six months exactly—well, six months and a day exactly—since the U.S. and Israeli war on Iran began. I want to know how you thought the world changed, given that the West right now, the combined West, U.S. and Europe, have been sounding the alarm about many global changes, not just the Strait of Hormuz, not just what's happened in West Asia, but also what's happened in Eurasia proper. Russia, North Korea has come up quite a lot, that their cooperation has been increasing dramatically, especially with North Korea, DPRK, using its relationship with Russia and the Ukraine conflict to get in some tests of not only its weapons, but also its combat troops. So your thoughts on how the world has changed in the last six months, and yeah, wherever you want to take them.

#KJ Noh

Well, you know, the world has changed in dramatic ways. I mean, I think the most important thing is that the U.S. has shown itself incapable of defeating a middle power. You know, despite all the king's horses and all the king's men, despite all of its forward bases, its extraordinarily expensive and sophisticated arsenal, it has shown that it is incapable of defeating a middle power. And so this arrogance that is then going to take the fight to China, which really is a peer competitor, is an act of madness. But I think, on the ruling elite, you can see there's some recognition of reality. If you read Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, you know, the CFR, you can see that there's some kind of slow-growth acknowledgment that the world has changed, and still they still want to take the war to China.

You know, the flesh is weak, but the spirit is still obsessed with war with China. And so that is really the dangerous piece. And as I said, you know, the nuclear option is the most dangerous part of it. But inside that situation, you know, let's think about Russia and North Korea. Certainly, Russia and North Korea—actually, the USSR and North Korea—have had strong ties, comradely ties, for almost

a century. And if you look at the top North Korean leadership, they all speak Russian, or they all used to speak Russian. There's something just very, very deep and connected. They share a border. And so North Korea is certainly helping out Russia in different ways, just as South Korea has been helping out Ukraine.

South Korea has been the largest provider of shells to Ukraine. It provided more shells than all of the EU combined. And its military contractor, Hanwha, you know, doing a lot of the military-industrial build-out in Eastern Europe. So there's a kind of asymmetry that's going on. North Korea is also, you know, working with Russia on, for example, space technology. North Korea is probably ahead in certain areas than South Korea, as far as certain types of missiles and, you know, space exploration is concerned. But North Korea and Russia have very, very close ties. They have a mutual defense treaty, as North Korea also has with China. And so you can see that, you know, what people refer to as cranks, the cranks alliance. This is kind of the heart of the multipolar system.

This is the multipolar system that has teeth, which is China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. These are the, you know, military powers, or the, you know, powers that will seriously, you know, push back when they are bullied. And that is, you know, kind of the core of a burgeoning multipolar system, which has other agglomerations, other systems: the SCO, the BRI, BRICS, et cetera. All of these, these are much looser affiliations. These are the ties, the weak ties of water, but water can still be powerful. The hydrogen bonds of water are still very, very powerful. But inside, the kind of solid steel spine that is inside this is the cranks. And the cranks are not going to bend or waver. They are, you know, fundamentally, you know, the core of the rising multipolar world.

Now, inside this situation, of course, North Korea is getting a workout with Russia. You know, for them, it's a kind of sparring practice. They understand that the U.S. still has designs, as it has had for over 70 years, on destroying North Korea. They've set themselves up again, like Iran, in a very asymmetrical fashion. In fact, some of Iran's strategies come directly out of North Korea. That is, you know, building deep sites, deep resources inside mountains. That's a North Korean strategy. And then also using literally the mountains themselves as, you know, a defensive barrier. That's also, you know, strongly influenced by North Korea.

But North Korea is, you know, sparring. It's getting a workout in Ukraine, and it is going to take whatever, you know, strategies and tactics it has developed. It's going to spread them all over its defensive perimeter with South Korea. Lee Jae-myung wants to de-escalate with North Korea. But as I said, once again, South Korea is not really a sovereign state. Most significantly, its military is controlled by the United States. 3.6 million troops are controlled by the United States. In fact, South Korea has one of the most stringent, longest, most brutal conscriptions on the planet. And that is largely because the U.S. controls South Korea's military.

South Korea's military does the dirty work for the U.S. military. It's always gone wherever the U.S. fights. South Korea is supposed to fight. The U.S. wanted South Korea to, you know, help the U.S., quote-unquote, demine the Strait of Hormuz. South Korea refused. So now, you know, there's been,

you know, a spat there. But ultimately, when push comes to shove, the U.S. controls South Korea's military. And this whole thing about reducing the military exercises, some people have speculated that it is a way of saying to South Korea, look, we haven't rehearsed enough together. You haven't passed the kind of benchmarks we've set for interoperability. We're going to delay.

We don't know if that's true, but that's one speculation that that's one way it could be leveraged and used as a way of not returning South Korea its own military. And in the meantime, North Korea is getting a workout with Russia. Certainly when Ratcliffe went to, you know, Moscow, he did not get to meet with Putin. We don't know. There's nothing—no information has been released—but there is some speculation that the U.S. is afraid that Russia will essentially take over and obliterate the leadership of Ukraine. And I think they were trying to make both entreaties and threats not to do that. So I think Ratcliffe going to Moscow is actually a sign of weakness, not a sign of strength.

#Danny

Yeah, and, well, there have been so many theories as to why he would take the C-17, why he would go all the way over there, and why Russia would receive him. This is the CIA, so the CIA could have said anything, anything to get an ear with Russia. But what does Russia actually want with someone like Ratcliffe, who actually isn't an intelligence person? I don't know if he's a lawyer or a politician. He's probably getting orders himself on what he should be saying. And so it is very likely that he would throw in there, hey, this is what the U.S.—this is what we want you to do. Don't do it. Don't do what we think you're going to do. I could see that. But Russia has not changed course at all since that meeting. Actually, Russia just conducted one of its heaviest attacks on Kyiv just last night. And it seems like that actually is the direction the war is going in: full and total surrender for Ukraine.

So it's not going well. But, KJ, my question to you is: with the Iran war, I pulled up that Washington Post article which said that there are few good options—China, very, very, very few good options. Such few good options that actually it seems like the United States is hesitant to not continue on the path of encircling and trying to contain China, but hesitant to escalate in a manner similar to, let's say, Iran—very hesitant to do that. But there are some who say, KJ, that the multipolar world is, even if we could say it's rising, it is not able to stop the U.S. empire from what some of us even say, some commentators say, is flourishing. That its ability to, for example, dictate terms against Venezuela and to be able to place pressure on key points, the blockades in various areas, especially Iran, that that indicates that the multipolar world is still very much in trouble.

What do you make of—how do you see, actually, the world situation now, given this contrast of the Iran war going very poorly, the U.S. having very few options, Ukraine, China, but leaning heavily on Venezuela to pump out oil essentially on demand? How does that change things, the overall situation in the world, to you?

#KJ Noh

You know, for the past decades, you know, we've had this neoliberal system and, you know, neoliberal and liberal internationalist order where the pretense was that the U.S. was holding up some kind of, you know, rules-based order that was to the benefit of the rest of the world, blah, blah, blah, etc. Absolute and complete bullshit, as far as the facts reveal. What we see now is a reversion to primitive accumulation. There's simply naked barbarity, naked colonization, naked violence, naked genocide. So the mask has come off. They've taken off the white gloves because they are desperate. They are no longer capable of doing this kind of more nuanced manipulation and exploitation. So this reversion to primitive accumulation is clear.

It accelerated in the 2000s with the rape and pillage of Iraq, and it has simply continued to escalate to this point. Trump is not an aberration. He's simply the continuation of a very clear trend that happened. And what we see also is the continuing destruction of U.S. industrial capacity. That is an ongoing logic of monopoly capital. Monopoly capital financializes. It does not industrialize. It's a one-way street. At the very best, there are small pockets of military Keynesianism that make pretenses to doing military-industrial development, but they're very few and far between, and certainly falling short. So the U.S. strategy at this point is really to rely on proxies. It wants to use Japan's industrial capacity, South Korea's industrial capacity.

It was trying to get India on board as well for industrial supply chains. That hasn't worked out so well. But certainly Korea and Japan have been roped into this system. South Korea has been press-ganged into literally donating \$350 billion of investment into the United States for industry. If that actually goes through, it will actually collapse the South Korean economy. But, you know, once again, you know, the gangster, you know, the leech doesn't care if you collapse. They just want that blood. But the proxies are going to be playing a larger and larger role. So, as you said, the U.S. hasn't stopped its plans for taking down China because the entire Western global system is built on extraction from the global periphery.

Trillions of dollars extracted from the global periphery every single year. Without that continued extraction, the West cannot sustain its standards of living, which are already collapsing. But if those standards were to collapse even further, then they would face revolt inside their own countries. And, you know, God knows we may be very close to that already. But in order to, quote unquote, buy off the labor aristocracy and the middle class and what have you, it needs to continue to exploit and extract from the Global South. China is the most powerful country. It's creating a gravitational force that is creating escape velocity for many countries of the Global South.

And they're developing on their own terms, like China, and connecting in a different configuration than this system where the U.S. was the apex predator and everybody else was on the U.S. plantation. So that is the existential threat. The parasite, when it sees the host trying to detach itself, it sees that as an existential threat. And that's why they're willing to destroy the planet, including using nukes to keep up their power and privilege. They'd rather see the end of the planet than the end of their power and privilege. But inside this situation, blockades are definitely part of the agenda. Financial blockades are being attempted, although, as I said, dialectically, they will blow

back on the U.S. Part of the strategy of war against China is called AirSea Battle, which is also the doctrine of war that they tried to use against Iran.

The Air-Sea Battle was designed specifically for China and Iran. It has been shown not to work against Iran. Certainly it will not work against China. There's another component of Air-Sea Battle, which is sometimes referred to as distant blockade, which is choking off China at multiple choke points, most notably the Strait of Malacca. We'll see if that works. China has, since the declaration of the pivot in 2011, essentially been building overland routes to bypass these naval choke points the U. S. has wanted to weaponize since 2009, since the development of Air-Sea Battle and distant blockade. So we'll see if that works.

But a lot of what we refer to as the Belt and Road is not simply the vascularization of the Global South into this interconnected economic whole, but also a way to bypass the choke points that traditionally the colonial powers have used to exercise total control over the Global South. So we'll see if that works out. But certainly China has planned ahead. It's working skillfully and carefully. It's continuing to develop industrial capacity. It's continuing to give the means of production, in particular means of production of energy, i.e., renewables, and the means of production of knowledge, i.e., artificial intelligence, as a public good to the Global South.

So there are optimistic things that are happening. There are good trends, but at the end of the day, we are still in this dusk where we don't know which way things will turn. The most dangerous thing is whether it can weaponize its proxies enough to engage in a devastating war against China. And as I said again, right now that is being rehearsed. For example, Freedom Edge, the trilateral exercise between Japan, Korea, and the United States, full of contradictions because Japan and Korea are like cats and dogs. They simply do not get along because of Japan's long colonization of Korea.

#Danny

Yeah.

#KJ Noh

But yes, but right now Freedom Edge is going on. It's starting out at Jeju Island, which is where they built a naval base several years ago. We had been fighting it for over a decade. There are articles that I wrote in 2013 pointing out that the U.S. was going to take this new base and use it as a center of operations against China. That has been shown exactly to be true. It's not a Korean base. It's not a tourist base. It is a U.S. military base designed for war against China. And the history of this is very, very ominous. So, for example, Jeju Island is the southernmost tip of South Korea. It's an island which is the southernmost tip of Korea. It's about the size of Oahu. And it has been used as a military base in the past. For example, when the Japanese attacked Nanjing for the Nanjing Massacre, most of those attacks originated from Altiru Air Base on Jeju Island.

And it's been set up as that same kind of central forward base for an attack on China. It connects along the first island chain to Okinawa and then to Taiwan. This entire region is being militarized, and Japan is arming itself to the teeth. As I said, this is ISIS with an aircraft carrier, ISIS with submarines, and they are arming to the teeth. And the kind of weaponry they're stacking there is designed to wipe out China's cities. They say it's counter-strike capacity. Bloody nonsense. Because counter-strike capacities, you don't use subsonic weaponry. That's like, you know, a slow haymaker is not a counter-strike. It's not a parry. It's not a counter-strike. It is an offensive weapon. And Japan is lining the first island chain with offensive missiles.

#Danny

Well, what's so, I think, interesting and maybe a connection that not many people make is the way that the United States has utilized all of its various proxies, vassals in West Asia to conduct its war against Iran. I mean, the refueling, the standoff munitions, all of this couldn't happen without very compliant Gulf states, and of course Israel right by its side doing all of this. I would say that that's a model that it tries to replicate everywhere, including in the Asia Pacific. It's trying to replicate that model right now in the Asia Pacific and cultivate similar kinds of leaders, similar kinds of politics, and of course, the military arsenals and the hardware necessary to do something similar, of course, in a different context.

As you said, KJ, a land-sea battle. There is sea there. They can't do it the same way. So that, I think, is important to note. And as to the question of the world changing, I do think that there's much positive happening in the world. As you say, KJ, China and the multipolar world are leading all of it, and actually, I think, making quite significant gains. Iran has made huge headway in that regard. But I think also one big problem we have is on the domestic front in the United States and understanding exactly what's going on in the world. You probably caught this letter, KJ, that was circulating from The Guardian.

It was an open letter signed by many, many, many people who would proclaim themselves probably progressive, leftist, anti-imperialist, against wars, against U.S. hegemony. But they signed on to a very shady letter in The Guardian talking about how Iran's political prisoners are trapped between two blades of scissors, meaning the Iranian government and the U.S. and Israel, even making direct comparisons between Iran and how it treats its political prisoners and Israel, which got many people angry. But there were so many people who signed this, including there was the curious case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, but many other professors and academics and scholars signed, from Robert D. Kelly, who has since disavowed the letter, Angela Davis, etc.

But I would say, KJ, that this is a trend in the United States that's very problematic, in the sense that people can criticize the state of the multipolar world all they want. But the reason why the U.S. empire can go on in this absolute crisis mode, in literal decline, but yet still be so dangerous is in large part because there are many people who—or at least the loudest voices tend to be those who are actually carrying water for the empire, rather than enough voices and enough weight and power

in opposition to it, in legitimate opposition to it. What are your thoughts on this letter and the state of the, I guess, U.S. political situation as we enter the last five minutes here?

#KJ Noh

Well, the first thing is, you know, Mumia is in prison, so we don't know what kind of information he gets. And we also don't know if he signed it at all. In fact, the, you know, the handwritten message seems to indicate the same, right?

#Danny

He disavowed it. Yeah, it seems like he disavowed it. He's functionally blind as well, so people should know this. And how communication gets to him is very complicated because he's also on death row.

#KJ Noh

Right.

#Danny

Well, he's off death row, but he's still locked up.

#KJ Noh

But essentially, this is a death watch for Mumia. He's old and in ill health, and he's been kept in prison for decades. One of the huge travesties in history, you know, in carceral history among, you know, millions, literally. But, you know, these people, I believe the kindest thing that we can say about them, people who sign, are that they are useful idiots. And at worst, they are deliberately muddying the water. And it doesn't surprise me. I mean, some of these are, you know, Amy Goodman's Democracy Now! crew, the people who appear on Amy Goodman, the kind of people whose job is to sheepdog and mystify and confuse people. So I think that the thing that struck out for me is that this was published in The Guardian.

Now, The Guardian hasn't come clean about who wrote it and how it was published, but... Danny, I've been a consistent reader of The Guardian for over four decades. I used to read it in South Korea when the only thing you could get was a print edition in the British Consulate Library, and it was marked up with, you know, red pencil and food stains because, you know, the consul, the first and second secretaries had to read it first before it was passed on to the reading rooms. I've been reading The Guardian for a long time. And the thing that we need to understand about The Guardian: it has always been a bad actor in news and politics. It's the propaganda sheet of the British liberal intelligentsia. And the history of The Guardian is very important to understand.

It was originally founded by cotton mill magnates in Manchester. That's why it used to be called the Manchester Guardian. And it cut its teeth as a paper that was opposing the Factories Act. This was the bill to have a 10-hour workday for children working in factories. It opposed a 10-hour day for children working in factories. It was opposed to unionizing. It was opposed to workers' rights. It was opposed to anything humanizing and pro-labor, and anything that prevented child labor. So workers' papers at the time called it the foul prostitute and the dirty parasite of the worst portion of the capitalist mill owners. And it has kept that pedigree since its inception. It supported the Boer War in South Africa, supported British rule over the Irish.

It blamed the Irish for Bloody Sunday in 1972, when the British paratroopers shot protesters. It was largely silent about the Vietnam War, including the My Lai Massacre. It supported the bombing of Yugoslavia, the invasion of Iraq, Libya, Syria—every Western neocon aggressive criminal war it has supported. And it's also been a tool of Zionism. In fact, when there was this Republican operative, Josh Treviño, who said that it was cool that Americans on the Gaza flotilla could be killed by the IDF—this was including Alice Walker—the Guardian, instead of critiquing this idea, hired him. And so this is what The Guardian is. It destroyed Jeremy Corbyn. It concocted the link between Julian Assange and Donald Trump. It has been an ugly, horrific vector of propaganda against China, in particular regarding Xinjiang.

It's one of the biggest manufacturers of propaganda and lies against China and also against Russia. So it has literally been a blight on humanity. It has the suffering and blood of millions on its hands. And so this is not out of character. So I think this is a good moment. It's a good learning moment for anybody who thinks that The Guardian is worth reading or even worth donating to. You should never donate money to the bullet that is going to blow your brains out. So anyway, I think this is a good teaching moment for people to understand what The Guardian is. If you read it in The Guardian, you can discount it. At the very least, you should read it critically. You can read it if you want to inform yourself on what the ruling class wants you to think. But don't think that this is actually reflective of what is happening in the world.

Certainly, it's not anything that enlightens you politically. And most of all, don't pay any money to it. And every time you read it, it has this, you know, like collection plate with a spike protruding—yeah, yeah—every time. Even when I was just pulling it up, there it comes up: "Please give us money." Yeah, it says, you know, "How many articles did you read without paying a penny? How dare you?" But I mean, the thing is, do not subscribe or fund The Guardian. If anything, you can fund Danny, this show, or any of a number of other good alternative media sites. But really, this is the New York Times for British twits. And anybody who takes it seriously needs to think twice. And anybody who publishes in it will automatically need to reconsider where they stand and what they think.

#Danny

Totally. I mean, even just here, KJ, talk about prison. I feel like I'm being squeezed from both sides, even just here. Support The Guardian at the top, and then at the bottom. This is what we're up against. You can't get rid of that either. No matter how much you try, you can't get rid of it. It gets bigger if you try. So it just stays there saying, "Support us, support us." Oh, I guess you click maybe later. But here, KJ, this letter, just to close, no identification of who actually created this letter, who wrote this letter. And on social media, there were some shady groups, Iran for Democratic Society or something, some very shady social media handles that were sharing it.

They're all gone now, so you don't even have any record of them. All this is to say is that really, for those who really have, you know, we can control for Mumia because of his incredibly oppressive situation and the fact that he has come the most clearly out with his actual position on the Iran war. But everybody else, I just have to say, it's like, shame on you. Like, really, shame on you. If you're academics, scholars, you're people who say that you have principles that you're trying to promote and educate others around and hopefully change the world, to sign a letter like this and then claim, "Oh, I didn't know what I was signing."

Angela Davis even doubled down on this, saying, "Oh, well, we can't negate the fact that Iran is repressive." I mean, it's just, I think it's just shameful in the sense that it really does, it really does make even these, a lot of these voices who would have a lot of respect from a lot of people look like dupes, or as you said, worse than that, you know, literal, you know, complicit agents for what is obvious to me. It's an obvious operation. It's obvious somebody wrote this to misdirect and to stir up something. And I think that's just shameful, to fall into that without even—and then claim you didn't know. I think that's really ridiculous to me. But any final thoughts, KJ, as we close the show here?

#KJ Noh

Well, I mean, I think this is a good moment to emphasize that we inhabit a world of complete and total propaganda. This is, as Casey said, we'll know our project is complete when everything that the public believes is a lie. And, you know, once again, not to hit you over the head, but, you know, The Guardian has really been a bad actor in this propaganda apparatus—an effective one, but clearly unethical, immoral, you know. And there's a media watch site called Media Lens, which has actually focused and done some really good reporting on The Guardian. And, you know, to summarize what they say, or to quote them, they say, "The Guardian's role is so appalling, so horrific, the propaganda blitz that it has sought to start a war with Iran."

And it has real responsibility for promoting catastrophic crimes, the flagship of state fearmongering and a propaganda service on behalf of state power. I think we have to remember this and, once again, remind yourself, because it's never enough, how deeply propagandized we are and how deeply misled and mystified the entire system is set up. And so we have to continually do this work of, you know, thinking critically and affirming what is real and true, and then communicating and conversing with people who are grounded in reality. Without that, we don't have a chance. But if we

do, we do. And the stakes are very, very high. As I said, we are looking at a transitional moment for, quote unquote, this time of monsters, where things could go either way, and catastrophic outcomes are both possible, as well as a better world.

#Danny

I think that's a great place to close. Everybody, hit the like button before you go. I want to thank this new member, Alexandra Carr. Thank you. And thanks to Kate C. Come on, show your appreciation. Hit the like. Thank you so much for the super chat. And definitely do hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. Tomorrow at 1 p.m. Eastern time, I'll be back with Professor Mohammad Marandi to continue the conversation. So be sure to join us August 30th, 1 p.m. Eastern. That is 7 p.m. Central Europe time. I hope to see you there. Everyone, thank KJ with a like. And we'll have to have you back on soon, KJ. It was great to be back with you. I know you've been traveling. Everybody, I'll see you tomorrow. Until next time, bye-bye.