

Trump in PANIC, F-15 Rescue BLOWS UP – Iran & Yemen Expand War | Lawrence Wilkerson

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson takes down the lies behind the F-15 rescue operation story the Pentagon is now spreading and why Iran & Yemen expanding the war has caused panic and desperation for the Trump-led US empire. LIKE the video and 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/spiritho> #f15 #iranwar #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show. As you can see, I am joined by Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff and former U.S. Army colonel, to go over the latest developments. While the war is definitely expanding, Iran has downed three MQ-1 drones in a matter of 12 hours. There's also been Yanbu Port, Saudi Arabia, that has been shut down by Yemeni fire. But, Colonel Wilkerson, I wanted to begin actually with this gentleman. This is Bravo. This is the Air Force colonel who was one of the two surviving pilots of the F-15 Eagle that was shot down back in April. And as you all know, there's been a 60 Minutes interview that was given with him in it, where he gives his story.

This comes after Pete Hegseth strongly encouraged both of them to participate in the 60 Minutes interview, despite the fact that both had questions, as did military intelligence, about whether this was safe. Nevertheless, the badly wounded U.S. Air Force officer climbed a 7,000-foot Iranian ridgeline to hide after being shot down. Colonel Wilkerson, I wanted your reaction to this. I'll just read a bit of what he says here in his narrative. He says that... Here we go. So he says that his parachute wasn't able to get loose. He wasn't able to unfurl pieces of it loose.

And that, based on his and others' analysis, he fell somewhere between 70 to 100 miles per hour onto the floor from the attack. And then he said that he had to climb up a 7,000-foot ridgeline despite having what was a broken, I believe, a sprained ankle, bleeding from cuts, a broken arm, broken shoulder, and broken back. So, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, your thoughts on this story, the timing of it, as well as what you think about the reports? The 60 Minutes interview was highly controversial, both in the fact that it was done at all, the timing of it, given the state of the Iran war, and the narrative itself. Your thoughts on this?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I have no idea who decided on the timing. I have no idea if it was determined by the administration, someone in the administration, by DOD, or by the individuals, or by the network, or by a combination of all of them. But I will say a couple of things about it. One, I think some of the worst terrain I have ever war-planned for—and I did this in the mid-'80s to the late '80s, when Pacific Command, of which I was a member at the time, was the principal force provider for this region. And what I mean by that is there wasn't any Central Command except a bright spot in some soldier's eye who dreamed out of Tampa. We were really the combatant command that did everything. So I'm very familiar with the terrain that almost killed Alexander the Great, for example.

And I'm very familiar with the terrain that is now posing such an enormous problem for us in terms of bombing exclusively, really, to do damage to the assets that are hidden in that terrain. So it is probably some of the most forbidding terrain on the face of the earth. Not just that massive desert up in the corner, but also the Zagros Mountains, which was what I had a lot of time to plan cross-compartment operations in because we thought—long story, I'll make it brief—we thought the Soviets would never go into Afghanistan as they did without really wanting to play the game again, the old game, go much further than Afghanistan, down through Iran, the same route in reverse that Alexander the Great had traversed, and find warm-water ports in Bandar Abbas, Chabahar, whatever.

That's what we thought. So we were planning to fight the Soviets in this terrain, planning every day to fight the Soviets in this terrain. I understand the pain that this guy went through, I think, in terms of what he landed on and with regard to those mountains. I don't know if they were the same mountains, but, you know, mountains are mountains, and in Iran they tend to be pretty rough. I don't understand at all what he's talking about. Maybe I just didn't get it in the text there about hitting the ground at 100 miles per hour. If he hit the ground at 100 miles per hour, he must have been in the plane, not in the cockpit arrangement that would have come out with him had he parachuted down. I don't—if you understand that, let me know. Was it the plane?

#Danny

I'll bring it up. Keep going with your thoughts, and I'll bring it up right now.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

The plane that hit the ground at a hundred miles an hour, or him and his parachute, or him and his parachute and perhaps the ejection seat that didn't separate properly. I don't know. But if he hit the ground at that kind of speed, I'm surprised he's still alive, even if he had the protection of maybe a G-suit or whatever. Right.

#Danny

Here, before you keep going, Colonel Orgers, it says Bravo said, based on my description, the injuries that I had, the professionals think I hit the ground, him hitting the ground after ejection, going somewhere between 70 and 100 miles per hour. Wow.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

He must have picked up a hell of a wind. His chute must have picked up a hell of a wind, because I've come down in a parachute, for example, almost horizontal. If the wind's really bad, especially the surface wind, you have a hard time doing a parachute landing fall because you're coming down on your side, virtually, because the parachute's out here and you're out here. So that could have been the problem. And these guys are not trained paratroopers, so they don't necessarily know anything about parachute landing falls other than maybe having practiced.

#Danny

He says they do. This is what's so incredible about the narrative. He says that they have been trained around these things, and that he didn't even really have a parachute unfurled, that he had a really hard time pulling it apart and using it at all. So essentially, he was falling almost top speed. Again, the narrative feels very...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

He's very fortunate to be alive then, because I've hit the ground with a parachute fully deployed and almost broke my neck. So he's very lucky to be alive. And I would say typical Air Force exaggeration there, perhaps. Never met an Air Force pilot who didn't hit his target with all his bombs. Never met an Air Force pilot who didn't shoot down everything in the sky. Never met an Air Force pilot who didn't do a BDA that said, "I hit every single target three times." So, you know, I don't know.

#Danny

Precision even when falling from the sky. But, Colonel Wilkerson, let me just actually remove this so I can pull up the image. This is what the ridgeline looks like according to what I believe was AI imagery generated from CENTCOM itself.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I looked at a lot of those when we were doing more planning. It's some of the toughest mountain country in the world. You want to think about the Alps or the Himalayas or, you know, some of the more noted mountain ranges, the Rockies, for example. They're tough too. But this is really cross-compartment hell in Iran.

#Danny

All right. Well, Colonel Wilkerson, he said he broke his back. He had a broken, fractured back, fractured arm, sprained ankle, climbing this. I mean, there's just a lot of questions. I guess, do you have any questions about the narrative that's being told? There's also, I think, a lot of scrutiny about this whole interview, not only because the details are a bit fishy, right? Falling to the ground at 100 miles per hour, it's very close to, like, the limit before you explode, basically, with the floor. But then there's also the fact that Pete Hegseth was the one encouraging this, and some think maybe even bullying this to happen, like pushing it really hard to happen, despite questions from even General Dan Caine and military intel, and at one point Bravo, and they're calling the other pilot Alpha, their objections as well. Do you see anything that might be scripted about this, or do you see this as 100 percent entirely authentic from your view?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Anything involving Pete Hegseth is probably scripted, and anything involving Pete Hegseth is probably at least a third a lie, maybe even more. So the fact that you described it that way, if Hegseth had a hand in it, then his desire to first find something positive to say about this debacle of a war with Iran, and two, to demonstrate what testosterone really means, would be absolutely monumental pressure on him to go ahead with it. And so I could see him having somewhat constructed this.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah, and here, Colonel Wilkerson, this is the Jerusalem Post, but they're citing CNN. Hegseth and the Pentagon pressured F-15 crew to appear in the 60 Minutes Iran rescue story. U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and political officials reportedly pushed for the airmen to take part in the CBS program, while military officials raised concerns over security and political messaging. I think some of the concern was, too, is that if you're rehashing one of the most embarrassing moments in recent U.S. military history, that it might also have the opposite impact. But I'm curious what you make of this. Is there precedent for the—I thought there were laws around this—to push military personnel and the Pentagon in general to use the media to kind of spin events. Your thoughts on this?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I don't think that would deter Pete Hegseth at all in that warped mind of his. And I take you back to—you probably have seen the movie. It might not have meant as much to you of your generation as it meant to me of my generation. But the movie that I think was called *Flags of Our Fathers* or something like that, it was about the Mount Suribachi group and what they went through after they essentially hoisted the flag that became the picture on every newspaper in America out of the Pacific War and World War II, Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima. And that movie, I think, was pretty accurate. A lot of it was hyped. A couple of the guys had a real problem with going around with that hype. They

knew, for example, that they were in zero danger up there, that the biggest danger was the wind, and that the flag was put up several times in order to satisfy the photographer.

Other things that I can't remember, but the details were pretty sordid when you looked at it. And it tore up several of them. The Native American, for example, in particular, who was kind of the warrior tradition. He was a Native American Marine. And I think he took to drinking afterwards, which is a real problem sometimes for Native Americans. They just don't have their chemistry, doesn't have the tolerance for alcohol the way others might. Very sad movie. Very sad movie. But it was based on the fact that this was all sort of made up, and you couldn't back off of it once it became—every newspaper in America had that picture on its front page. And they were heroes, and they went on bond drives to raise money for the war and all this. And the movie does a good job of showing you how it almost post-traumatic stressed all of them. And there could be some of that here too.

#Danny

Hmm. Yeah, well, here, back to the CNN report. It says the report said that Hegseth was unusually involved in the production details of the 60-minute interview segment with Bravo, far more than is customary for a U.S. Defense Secretary. He said he and his staff were eager to present a dramatic reconstruction of the incident on 60 Minutes, particularly the rescue operation. Two sources told CNN that political officials in Hegseth's office initially insisted that both crew members take part. They were both hesitant. He then met with them privately and asked them nicely, I guess, if they wanted to participate.

And then finally, Bravo agreed. So even the conditions around this interview itself are very shaky, Colonel Wilkerson. But I guess maybe your thoughts on the actual incident itself. Just your comments on both Hegseth's involvement, and then also, is this an example of heroism, or is it something else? Because this is what is being now portrayed to us, that this was a very heroic mission, no man left behind, what the U.S. is capable of. It comes at a very, I think, convenient time. So your thoughts on the actual incident. You'd have to tell me, how is it that this wasn't entirely the rescue that is in the survival.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

The pilots, and not any effort that the rest of the military made to get them out. I mean, effectively all they did was land and pick them up, I assume. So how is that heroic? If it occurred the way it was described there, which I doubt seriously—the hundred miles per hour, I really doubt. But if it occurred that way, the heroism is all on the part of the people who endured it in the mountains, not on the people that rescued them. So I don't understand that logic. And your question about Hegseth is that he came from Fox News, and his wife was, I think, the same.

So we have prima donna, you know, producers of this sort of Art of the Deal TV, dare I say it, hyperbole, maximum hyperbole, exaggeration, show everything as if it were, as I was just describing this World War II incident, a total success and demonstrates your leadership by that total success and all that accrues thereto. In other words, it was a blatant attempt to get something positive out of what is basically totally negative that Hegseth is very deeply involved with. And I would say it failed catastrophically and will fail catastrophically. Now, the incident with the people who put the flag up on Mount Suribachi didn't necessarily fail because they made such hype all across America with it that they raised enormous amounts of money from the war bonds these guys advocated and sold and so forth.

So that at least had the ameliorative effect of helping the war effort in a general sense. But it ruined these guys' lives, or it ruined a considerable number of their lives. And it was tantamount to lying and cheating to some of these people when they got really down to brass tacks about it. And I would be remiss if I didn't say that maybe these two airmen would be the same way if they were put in a corner and were able to tell the truth. This was a staged event to get some credit where no credit was due, really, except maybe to their heroism. And the credit that was due to Hegseth and the Defense Department is negated totally by the freaking war in the first place. So I don't know how to put it any better than that.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right. And here's the wreckage of the scheme. You might remember, Colonel Wilkerson, the original report back in April had the United States during the so-called rescue mission, which Iran actually framed as—Iran itself said this was a raid, a staged raid that was supposed to enter and steal their enriched uranium inside of Isfahan. It didn't go well. The F-35 was shot down.

#Danny

The United States destroyed C-130, I believe, jets that were stuck in the sand or something of the sort.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It reminded me of Operation Eagle Claw in Tehran, or in Iran, when we tried to rescue the hostages and we lost a C-130 and a helicopter. Yeah. I think eight people were killed there too.

#Danny

Yeah, so this was the scene that was left behind, which kind of goes in contradistinction to what was being described in this interview. But lastly, Colonel Wilkerson, in your final comments, there are little nuggets also of what just seems to be outright propaganda. I mean, I don't know if he was told

to say this, but the interviewer asked him, "Given your injuries, how did you find the strength to make it up the mountain?" He says, "Never let a lack of motivation put you on Iranian TV." And then he also closed—this is not actually in the transcript.

So one thing I want to note to viewers: I can't actually pull up the interview because CBS does not allow even a few seconds. I don't know how they do this. They have some automated system. They don't even allow a few seconds of their interviews to go up on YouTube and be shared, even altered or reacted to. But in the interview, he also says that the reason why he wanted to talk about this was because he wanted to show what the U.S. is really capable of. And it sounded very scripted in that sense, Colonel Wilkerson. But your thoughts on this? Somebody who's falling 100 miles, 70 miles per hour out of the air.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

"This shows what the U.S. is capable of" came right out of Pete Hegseth's mouth.

#Danny

Thinking about Iranian TV, really?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

And, you know, I remember Powell and I talking about Mogadishu. He had just left the chairman's office. And most Americans don't know this, but when a chairman steps down, usually in October of his fourth year, two terms, two terms, two terms, he steps down and he stays in the Pentagon for about 30 to 60 days, which Powell did. And I was the only person who stayed with him other than an Army E-7, Cammy Browne. And we stayed with him that whole time. And he stays so he can talk to the new chairman in case something comes up. Well, something did come up immediately. We had Black Hawk Down in Mogadishu, if you remember that. And so what happened? What they were talking about there and what the pilot was talking about is he didn't want to be a Black Hawk Down.

He didn't want to be somebody paraded through the streets as a prisoner of war, with Iranians, you know, all around him, or on a CNN camera or whatever, being shown as a prisoner of war or whatever. I assume that's what he meant by that remark. And anyone would feel that way. I mean, I'm sure the people in Mogadishu who were treated to that kind of treatment felt the same way. Any soldier, sailor, airman, Marine would feel that way. I don't want to be on the enemy's TV screen. You think of Francis Gary Powers when his U-2 went down inside the Soviet Union. He didn't want to be on the Soviet TV screen, shown as being captured by the Russians after his U-2 was shot down and he had to crash-land or parachute, I guess. It's just something—you don't want the camera effect to have you in it that is deleterious to your country's interests. That's what he was saying, I think.

#Danny

Yeah. Well, Colonel Wilkerson, then, you know, how does this relate to the war now?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Because it's a desperate attempt to find something positive. I mean, it's so obvious that it's a desperate attempt by the losing Secretary of War, Secretary of Defense, to find something positive to say, and something that is up his alley in terms of what he's trying to do, from testosterone shots to screening women's menstrual cycles to trying to influence who is where and when. This is Pete Hegseth. And I'm told, more and more now, this is his wife. She's taking more and more of a hand in what he does and how he does it, particularly when it comes to the cosmetics of publicity.

#Danny

Right. Well, who—oh, all right. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um, well, Colonel Wilkerson, the war is definitely expanding, and it's not going too well. Trump is in panic. He's posted about a half dozen times on Truth Social, talking about oil in particular. In this one, blaming Biden, of course—a very signature move here—blaming Biden for the rise in oil prices. But the reports are getting really bad. According to U.S. oil executives, the great fuel crisis is now here. Trump administration officials say oil market disruption is temporary, but Chevron's Mike Wirth is warning global supplies are running low, with no respite in sight.

You have here Al-Gaia, which is a UAE tanker, was hit yesterday and was on fire and is tugging to port in Oman. Yanbu port, Aramco, and all over Saudi's oil infrastructure is really up in flames right now. This is Aramco, but Yanbu port has been shut down as of today. That was announced. So this war has expanded, Colonel Wilkerson, and the energy situation is incredibly bad. What do you make of this in light of the F-15 rescue narrative, this desperate attempt to make things look good? Is this to try to paper over what actually is a crisis and how this war is still going on? I mean, even the pilots had reservations about doing this at all, given the fact that the war is going on.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I think unquestionably that's what it is. It's a peevish and tiny little infinitesimal almost-event in the course of the war. I'm not trying to take anything away from what was apparent heroism on the part of the pilots, but I'm just saying it has really very little to do with the scheme of things, which is that we're losing and we're losing badly. Saudi Arabia is losing and losing badly. I said when MBS took the defense portfolio at first, grooming himself for crown prince and maybe even higher, I said, this man is not very smart. He's going to do very stupid things, and the royals are going to have to deal with that. And what did he do?

One of the first things he did to prove his bona fides as a defense minister was start this war with Yemen, which has been going on for a long time now and which caused us to be a participant in it in big ways, and got the Congress up in arms, passed legislation in both houses to get us out of the

war, and Trump vetoed the legislation. So this is a tortured route we've been on with Saudi Arabia. Now we're not there because we can't be. We don't have enough assets to spread around. So Saudi Arabia is on its own, and it's getting its ass handed to it. It's getting beaten, and it's getting beaten badly. And I don't know where Riyadh's going. Are they going to pick up and run? I understand they canceled going to the meeting in Oman. I suspect they canceled because they weren't sure they could get there.

We're seeing the region fall apart, and we're seeing it fall apart because some very dedicated people, some of whose predecessors, I should say, I trained. I know the difference between the southern Yemeni soldier and the northern Yemeni tribal soldier. They're tough as hell in the north and soft as hell in the south. And, of course, whom were we supporting? The government in Sana'a, as corrupt as you could possibly be. We'd send them a complement of M-16s, and they'd put them on the black market the next day, \$500 apiece. Thank you very much. Money in my pocket, the president would say, and the minister of defense, corrupt as hell. So that's whom we were supporting, the government in Sana'a. These people are tough, and they're going to prove it to us. And they are proving it to us, and they're proving it to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is going to have a hard time surviving.

#Danny

Yeah. Well, Saudi media—these are Saudi reports—and they are emphasizing civilian targets. But we know that Ansar Allah is really wreaking havoc in these missile and drone attacks on oil infrastructure in particular. And the situation is so bad, Colonel Wilkerson, that after Trump has reportedly rebuffed Saudi Arabia for any support, you now have Israel being begged by MBS to help out. And according to the Jerusalem Post, Israel is actually providing Saudi Arabia with intel assistance in this war. The problem is, Colonel, what good is that intel assistance doing? It seems like—I mean, Ansar Allah already has control over the Red Sea coast, but they're moving in Taiz, pushing forces past Aden. I mean, this is a lightning full-scale rout. What do you make of these reports, though, about Saudi Arabia begging Israel after the United States rebuffed Saudi Arabia?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Well, they went to Egypt too, as I understand it. So they're trying to get Sisi to help them. I'm sure he probably rebuffed them because he's got his own problems, significant problems, and probably not very interested in helping Riyadh. At the same time, I can understand going to Israel because Israel is at the base of all these problems. And let me just give you something that Netanyahu said about 48, maybe 96 hours ago or so, because I picked it up in Williamsburg when I was down there. And I'm listening to him speak in both Hebrew and English, the Hebrew being scripted underneath. And he's saying things like this. This is almost a direct quote.

Well, what other country in the world could be at war on seven fronts and winning on every front? Israel. That's how good we are. We're fighting on seven fronts and we're winning on each of those

fronts. No one else in the world could do that. No one. Well, okay, first of all, show me the fronts that you're calling seven fronts. Second, show me how you're winning in a sense that means something. And third, tell me that this is not simply campaign rhetoric because you're going to lose and you're becoming desperate. And, oh, by the way, your business with Haaretz and your suit against them has been responded to by the editorial staff at Haaretz, and basically what that response is: we have the goods, and go ahead with your lawsuit.

So that tells me Haaretz would never have published what they published if they didn't have the goods. They're pretty reliable in that respect. So he's in real trouble. So asking him for help is like going to a fireman who's already at a six-alarm blaze and saying, "Have you got any water?" And I wouldn't ask Israel's Mossad for intelligence help any place in the region right now because Iran has very effectively neutralized Mossad, neutralized them in a way that I didn't think possible, ever could be done. And so getting intelligence help from Israel is like saying, as I said, you're getting water from a fireman who's out.

It doesn't make a whole lot of sense. And no matter what these countries might do to seek help from Israel in whatever entente they might haphazardly put together, the ultimate problem in the region, again, as the almighty foreign minister said twice, is not Iran; it's Israel. So you better think very hard if you believe you're going to exist post-Trump's war in Southwest Asia. And that's a really doubtful belief. If you're going to exist in anything like the form you existed before, you better know that the power in the Gulf, from the moment this conflict subsides to the indefinite future, is going to be Iran, period.

So you better be making your peace with Tehran, and you better have some idea of how to live with them post-Trump exiting your region. Because when we exit, we're taking everything, boy. We ain't going to leave anything in the region on the ground. We may leave some contractors here and there, some programs here and there because there's residuals, but we're not going to be there. Iran is going to be there, as big as Western Europe, pissed off as hell at you for anything you've done adverse to their interests. And you better make some kind of, you know, makeup with them because they're your power to reckon with in the future. Not the United States, not Israel, not Turkey, not Egypt, not any of these other countries. Iran.

#Danny

Yeah, great points, too. And what's also astounding, and I think shows the level of not just desperation but maybe callous depravity, is the fact that Israel's entire foreign policy goal, if we can call it a foreign policy goal, is chaos in the region so that it can achieve its own expansionist ambitions, what people call a Greater Israel coalition. Greater Israel isn't, "Ooh, let's have stability in all of these places so we'll talk and work it out and they'll give us their land." No, it's about Israel expanding, part of which is to have this chaos.

And so asking Israel for help, too, feels like maybe a counterproductive effort in and of itself, and also just shows, too, the fact that these regimes, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf regimes, they're more interested in help from Israel than they are in maybe figuring out what you just said, Colonel Wilkerson, figuring out how to live with a new Iranian power in peace. But also, let's not forget also the Palestinian people, the people in the region in general, whether they've been in and around Palestine, who are being—

#Lawrence Wilkerson

They've really been lost. You're right. You put your finger on it. They've really been lost in all of this, which I'm assuming was at least an indirect, if not a direct, purpose of everything Netanyahu's been doing: fighting on seven fronts, winning on every front, and, to a certain extent, what his buddy in Washington has been doing, trying to get people's attention off the real issue in the region, which is Israel killing people wantonly, homicidally, genocidally. I mean, whatever you want to say about it, and still doing it, particularly in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. Still, they are killing people every single day with Tony Blair's blessing, with Jared Kushner's blessing, Trump's blessing. They're still doing this. And arguably, the only power in the region that they have that's looking to make their situation tolerable, if not better, is Iran and the Houthis.

#Danny

Yeah. Colonel Wilkerson, what does this game changer a lot of people are talking about—the Bab al-Mandab Strait now geographically in the control, not just simply of Ansar Allah having the ability to use, you know, missiles and drones to make shipping hard for Saudi Arabia and blockade them, but now geographically they have the territory they say is theirs anyway back from Saudi Arabia, and can more easily affect alterations, changes, and policies around the Bab al-Mandab Strait. How much of an impact does this have on the world situation? You know, many observers—Fortune magazine, for example—came out with a report saying Bab al-Mandab Strait, Yanbu, these were supposed to be the exit strategy for what happens when the Strait of Hormuz is no longer viable. And here we are. The Strait of Hormuz is not viable. Very few ships go out of there per day. And now the Bab al-Mandab Strait is no longer in the control of anyone that the United States is aligned with. How big of a deal is this?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Well, I think I might have mentioned to you—I've done so many podcasts, I'm not sure who I've mentioned it to now—but a few years ago, everybody who was anybody in Europe, EU, the individual countries, EUCOM, the combatant commander there, SHAPE, SACEUR, AFRICOM, all came to Washington, what was then the real United States Institute of Peace. Strange name, that. And we had this tabletop game. And we had a day of briefings, and all manner of ambassadors and counselors, and Mercy Corps was there as the biggest humanitarian organization. Médecins Sans

Frontières was there also, Doctors Without Borders, a number of other organizations. Everybody was there who had a dog in the fight, really.

We had working groups on the second day where CENTCOM and AFRICOM and other commands had special groups meeting and issues to discuss and so forth. All to say that in this, we all decided, I think, conclusively, in the out-briefing by the two-star general who sort of was the game supervisor, the tabletop supervisor, and his equivalent ambassador officer, they all said, I think we determined that the Red Sea is the new cockpit of strategic competition in the region. The Persian Gulf is not anymore. And we're going to see most of the attention of the world's security forces. Look at Djibouti. We were almost sinking Djibouti, which is, if you look at the map, directly across from the tip of Yemen and on the Bab al-Mandab axis, if you will.

We were sinking Djibouti, much to the pleasure of the leader of Djibouti, who was soaking all the French, Japanese, American, and other forces that were trying to get there. The Turks tried to get in there, but there was no room, so they moved up somewhere around Somaliland. But everyone was moving to this new strategic cockpit of competition. That was the prediction. That was the assessment of everyone, civilian and military, in that very large tabletop simulation. All to say, the criterion they used to make that decision and to make the adjustments that they all were trying to make at the time in their military dispositions and other dispositions in general was to accommodate that reality.

Of course, in the middle of that, we had the Combined Joint Task Force, and we had the U.S. Task Force that were dealing with the Somali pirates, showing the Chinese participated in the CJTF, for example, showing that you could cooperate to take care of a threat in that region. But that threat was, in comparison to what we're looking at now, minuscule. The Somali pirates were pretty much dispatched fairly quickly. Understand, they're back now because the Houthis have given them an opening. And so they're back again, practicing their trade off the coast there, just taking ships and stealing whatever they can off of them.

And if you look at that from that perspective, that 60% of the world's commerce passes through there, that it's much more diversified than the Strait of Hormuz, which is principally the things we've talked about, helium, and everyone knows oil and gas. The Bab el-Mandeb is really a gateway to a lot more. And it's very expensive to go around the Horn or to go up in some alternate route structure. And so we decided this is serious. That's why everybody's coming there. All you got to do is look at Djibouti to tell. Well, we're there now. And we've got a situation that, in that entire tabletop, two days of working with everyone in the world who had a dog in the fight, so to speak, military and civilian, we didn't even think about this sort of scenario.

We should have. We should have, because we had seen what was happening between, for example, the workforce that was coming out of Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and other countries like that, very poor countries overall, and going into essentially Saudi Arabia, but also the Emirates and others, as basically wage slaves. But they were going there because they could make enough money there,

even under the horrible conditions particularly the Saudis put them into, and the UAE, and I should say Qatar and others too, they could make enough money to send home and give their families a whole lot better chance.

At the same time, you have people retreating from the growing war in Yemen the other way, going across the sea the other way. And so you have people taking advantage of both. They were charging something like, at that time, \$2,500 equivalent U.S. dollars to get in their rickety old boat, which would sink sometimes and kill them, and go across that way to either get back to their money jobs or to get away from the war. And they would pay \$2,500 to go the other way to get to the money jobs. And we were losing a lot of people in the middle of that ocean because of that.

All to say, this is a very volatile region of the world, in addition to being so strategic in terms of commodities going up and through the Suez Canal. Now we're there in a circumstance that no one contemplated. They should have, because we saw the tensions building on both sides of the sea. We saw what was happening with our naval assets and the inability to really deal with some of this stuff. And now here we are with the predictions of it being truly important to control that water having come true, without so much as the ability to do it, and having been proven that over the Houthi events before. We ran with our tail between our legs from Houthis, I remember.

#Danny

We talked about that. You were on this show.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Yeah. So, you know, Petey said we're going to beat them in a couple of days. We didn't. We ran, and now we're looking at the prospect of perhaps having to go back. Are we going to do a Marine amphibious landing on the southern shore of Yemen and try to stop the Houthis? I don't know.

#Danny

It sounds like a disaster. It does.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It sounds like a lot of people didn't do a lot of actionable foresight-type thinking.

#Danny

You know, Colonel Wilkerson, now, do you believe J.D. Vance when he says that the United States has picked up the phone and called Ansar Allah, or the Houthis as they call them? Do you believe that that's the case? And do you think that Ansar Allah would be picking up the phone to answer the call?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

If that happened, I would envision one of those really talented dudes who comes on the TV every now and then, who speaks pretty good English, and I know there are a couple of them, and he would probably say, "Dude, I'm out of here. I'm not talking to you. Put somebody on that means something," or something to that effect, because they have no reason to be talking to us.

#Danny

Just as we keep lying about the Iranians talking to us.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

They are talking to us. They've said it. The Speaker—the speaker equivalent of the Majlis—the foreign minister, Araghchi, others have said, "I don't know what they're talking about. We haven't talked to anybody since we had some indirect discussions about the MOU, which you backed away from completely and reneged on. We haven't talked to anybody." Now, they could be lying too, but I don't think they are. I think they're telling the truth. I think we're the ones lying.

#Danny

Yeah, there's some reports that say that J.D. Vance is indeed trying at least to enter talks with Yemen. But the issue, it seems, Colonel Wilkerson, is that the oil markets—the oil crisis—oil executives are saying that crisis is here. Is this irreparable? But it seems like the only way it could be is if the United States does what it probably should have done a long time ago, which is to go back to the terms that Iran had laid out and begin to meet them in order for talks to begin. But that seems very far away. And I'm not sure what your thoughts are on where this is all headed, given that the oil crisis is now being sounded by oil executives themselves, and neither the Yemen front nor the Iran war front are anywhere close to being resolved in any kind of meaningful way other than what we have right now.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

The Iranians have made some pretty powerful statements about even if we went back with what we would purport would be good-faith efforts to the MOU, they wouldn't trust us. It's over as far as they're concerned. It makes no difference if we went back saying preliminarily that we'd look at every single one of the issues, from reparations to frozen assets to lifting of sanctions immediately, both primary and secondary, to all the things the MOU had quite explicitly elaborated. Even if we went back to it, they would not trust us. They would not want to come back to it in formal negotiations themselves, indeed would not because of that. And flat out, they just have stated, they do not feel like we are a worthy partner to talk to.

So would they back up from that if we made a reasonable offer? And I don't know what that would mean to them. We'd probably have to eat a lot of crow to make a, quote, reasonable offer, unquote. And J.D. Vance seems the only member of the administration capable of doing that, in private at least. So I just don't know. I don't think there's a possibility of it, from either direction, of it taking hold in a way that would really produce a solution. And even if it did, that solution, being heavily weighted to the Iranian side of the arguments, if you will, would be acceptable to Donald Trump or, for that matter, to the Congress of the United States, such as it is right now.

Though I think increasingly at least half of that Congress in both parties is opposed to this war. It's just some of them haven't said it explicitly yet. I don't see how they could not be, really, when you look at the damage it's doing to us. And they're not totally stupid, these people on the Hill. Sometimes I think many of them are, but most of them have at least a brain well enough geared to think in terms of, we're losing this war. So I just don't know if there's a possibility anymore. The Iranians have pretty much said they do not want to talk to the United States of America in its present configuration, period.

#Danny

In the last six or so minutes that we have with you, Colonel Wilkerson, what do you make of the ways that this will impact the overall world order? We have Ukraine and Russia trading strikes on energy infrastructure, which Trump has also tried to blame for the increasing oil prices. He also said that he had negotiated a temporary truce between the two, but these strikes remain ongoing anyway. Of course, Xi Jinping is supposed to come to the United States in less than two weeks, and I'm curious what your thoughts are on how all of this is going to impact what, for many years, has been the ultimate—it's what used to be the ultimate goal, or at least what we all have been covering on the show as the ultimate goal—is the U.S. confronting Russia and China. That has been a pattern, that has been a policy for many years. Where are we now in that, given all this crisis afoot in West Asia? Yeah.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Let me sum up at the start with your middle point. Were I Xi Jinping—and I certainly am not—but I do know a little bit about the Central Party School and the way they think, and the Politburo and those members thereof. Were I Xi Jinping, I'd wait to about a week out and I would cancel, and I would cancel very publicly. And I would make some sort of very powerful but calm statement that every press outlet, video outlet in the world would inevitably pick up on. And I would say something like this: I've decided to cancel my planned trip to Washington, and I've decided based on essentially two reasons.

One, there is no leadership in Washington with whom I wish to talk because there is no leadership in Washington worth talking to. Two, I'm in a situation right now with regard to my allies and my friends and my compatriots in the world, which, by the way, comprises about two-thirds of the entire

world's population and probably an equivalent amount of its gross domestic product, and therefore the real part of the world that matters, that I do not wish to violate their confidence in me that has been bestowed in terms of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, India, and so forth.

So I'm not coming. I don't think he would do that in a minute because he is still looking for decent relations, if you will, with Washington, as is Putin in Moscow. But someone on the other side, as it were, of this inexorable, ineluctable, incredible march of power from West to East, flowing now over Central Asia—and if you look at the latest edition of National Geographic magazine, you see the New Silk Road that Peter Frankopan wrote about in the book of that name—you see what is really happening in the world that's meaningful, that's substantive, that's in most of humanity's interest.

You see it happening in this incredible wave of economic and other power that's flowing out of the East and about to consume Europe, which is one of the reasons why we stay in this war in Ukraine and one of the reasons Europe stays in it, because they don't want to be consumed. They assume this consummation, if you will, is inimical to them. They don't have the eyes and the foresight to understand that it is one of the best things that could happen to them. And so we're at a point now where some leader in the world of consequence, and I can think of no one fitting that definition better than Xi Jinping, needs to say this. He needs to say it forcefully, straightforwardly, and ultimately truthfully to Washington, D.C.

#Danny

Yeah, well, it seems, Colonel Wilkerson, that one of the major sticking points, because there isn't even actually a date announced yet, but this is from Taiwan-based media, is that China actually is looking at what the United States is going to do over arms sales to Taiwan, with Trump having recently announced, indicated, or referenced that giving arms to Taiwan or not might be a great bargaining chip in negotiations with China, which China has said, well, actually, it's not a bargaining chip at all. We just won't talk to you if you do it. Exactly.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I mean, when you do something like that, you've got to make sure that you have two aces, at least, in your hand. Trump has a pair of deuces.

#Danny

Right, right. So, last minute, your reaction to this and any final comments you have, Colonel Wilkerson?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Reaction to?

#Danny

Oh, to China. Xi Jinping may or may not be coming because of the timing.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Yeah, what I just said. Were I he, I would let it come to a pregnant moment in the international community and say, "I ain't going to," and then give some pretty, pretty specific reasons why. Or maybe I'd have Wang Yi come out and do it. I don't know, Wang Yi might be even more powerful doing it. That would say, "You're not even worthy of my response. I'm letting my foreign minister do it."

#Danny

That would be something else. Yeah, well, the original idea, I think, was for Trump to have Xi Jinping come and then say, "Wow, look at all of the things that we've done. Now, what are you going to do for us around all these questions vis-à-vis China?" But really, Xi Jinping would come in a moment of incredible crisis for the Trump administration. So I don't know if there's many cards that Trump will be able to pull. But Colonel Wilkerson, thanks so much for coming on. It was a great program. I know you have another date now, so I'll let you go. Thanks so much again. Thank you, and I'll talk to you again soon. Surely. Thank you for the opportunity. All right. See you again soon.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Bye-bye.

#Danny

All right, everybody. That's it for today's show. Hit the like button before you go. That helps boost this program in YouTube's algorithm. All the places you can find this program are in the video description. All the places where you can support this program are in the video description below: Patreon, Substack, and so on, much more. Tomorrow, 1 p.m. Eastern, I will have Scott Ritter on to continue the conversation. Again, hit that like button before you go. I want to thank all the moderators who were in the chat today. I see Sam Garcia in the chat. Usually Ware is also here. I want to thank all the YouTube members who were watching as well today. Thank you so much. You can become a YouTube member in the video description below too, if you don't want to do Patreon. In any event, thanks so much. Hit the like button again. Thanks to all who viewed today. I'll see you all again tomorrow, September 16th, 1 p.m. Eastern Time. Bye-bye.