

GAME OVER, Trump: His Venezuela Oil War Just BACKFIRED

From boat strikes on “narco terrorists” to open declaration of oil theft, CIA analyst Larry Johnson and former Army Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson reveal the real reason why Trump’s war on Venezuela has already failed. 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> #venezuela #trump #oil

#Danny

There’s another war brewing. It’s unclear how soon or what kind of action Donald Trump will take, but he’s definitely backed himself into quite a corner when it comes to Venezuela. Meanwhile, a major war crime scandal has broken out. Here’s what our friend Judge Napolitano had to say on Newsmax about the situation, which involves Hegseth’s possible orders to kill all of the surviving fishermen as part of this months-long battle the U.S. has been waging at sea, murdering dozens of people.

#Andrew Napolitano

I worked with Pete Hegseth for seven or eight years at Fox News. This is an act of war crime—ordering survivors, who by law are required to be rescued, to be murdered instead. There’s absolutely no legal basis for it. Everybody along the line who did it—from the Secretary of Defense to the admiral to the people who actually pulled the trigger—should be prosecuted for a war crime, for killing these two people. The Pentagon spokesperson had to say it, almost outing the entire chain of command.

#Journalist

Can you talk about the autonomy given to the commanders who are carrying out these operations—like Admiral Bradley—to make decisions? In this case, I’m assuming the first strike took out the boat, and then any actions that followed. Can you talk about the level of autonomy they have?

#Representative 1

Absolutely. The Secretary has been very clear in every statement we've released about these strikes: they are presidentially directed. The chain of command functions as it should. We make sure that commanders on the ground have their positions taken into account, and that they're able to tell us and make decisions if they see things that need to be flagged. But at the end of the day, the Secretary and the President are the ones directing these strikes. Any follow-on strikes, like those directed by Admiral Bradley, the Secretary 100 percent agrees with.

#Larry Johnson

Let's call it what it is—an exaggerated instance of abuse and a criminal act by a president. It didn't start with Donald Trump. But, you know, if you go back, maybe the war in Vietnam is where it really started and became particularly serious. The United States has gone around killing civilians who didn't pose a threat, or just because we said they did, and we'd be happy to keep doing it. Our justification over the last 24 years has been, "Oh, we've got to fight terrorism, because if they're terrorists, by God, we've got to kill them." You can't treat them with any kind of respect, like a combatant. The Geneva rules don't apply—the Geneva Convention, we can ignore that. And, you know, you had George W. Bush authorizing the killing of civilians.

You know, when I was doing all my consulting work with JSOC, they called the drone footage that was coming in—live footage—we referred to those channels as "kill TV," because you could tune in and watch a drone go out and blow people up on the ground without actually having any evidence that they were engaged in acts of war or in the process of killing or attacking Americans. These were like preemptive strikes. I remember trying to get an estimate over, like, a six-year period of how many we killed—it was around 60,000. And yet killing all those people didn't end the attacks on our soldiers. It required other things, like when we started paying the sheikhs in Iraq to hire security forces, because a lot of these guys who were planting bombs and blowing up our troops were doing so because they had no other source of income.

Jerry Bremer had made sure of that. It cut them off. But now Trump has taken this to a place where, traditionally, the Coast Guard handled these kinds of threats not by blowing up the boat. They would stop the boat, board it, seize the contraband, and arrest the participants if they were found carrying illegal drugs. You know, I never saw that kind of thing—and I participated in over 253 of these exercises. Usually, at the end of an exercise, when the force has been given permission to carry out a mission, they have to produce a CONOPS, a concept of operations, which goes up the chain of command and gets signed off on. Then they'll get an order—an execute order.

But I never once saw a rule of engagement approved for exercises that said, "If they look like bad guys, go ahead and kill them. Kill them all—it doesn't matter, women, children, anyone." Never saw that. And as a firearms instructor, I apply the same principle I teach civilians: the very last thing you want to do is pull out a gun and kill somebody. Taking a human life is something you have to take very seriously. You're justified in doing so only when that person or persons pose a direct threat to

your life, are causing you serious bodily harm, or are doing the same to someone you're with. Other than that, you don't have the authority to just kill somebody. Cops can't just sit there saying, "I think those guys on the corner are selling drugs."

So I'm going to shoot and kill them now, and then we'll go over and investigate. You don't do that. And that's exactly what Trump is doing. But again, I don't blame Donald Trump alone at all. Shame on these military officers who are carrying out these illegal orders—a bunch of cowards. They want their retirement more than they want to stand up and have a clear conscience and say, "No, sir, I am not carrying out that order." What we do is stop the boat and find out if they pose a threat. If they start shooting at us while we're trying to stop the boat, yes, then you can blow them out of the water, all right? They've crossed the line. They bought their ticket to the fireworks. But otherwise, you know, Trump is engaged in a criminal act, as is Pete Hegseth. But it didn't start with them. Remember when Barack Obama ordered the murder of al-Awlaki and his 17-year-old son?

#Danny

Yeah, I covered that here on this show.

#Larry Johnson

Exactly. So, I mean, like I said, this is not just about blaming Donald Trump. Our entire system became broken once George W. Bush got a favorable ruling from the Department of Justice, with guys like John Yoo, who said, "Yeah, torture's not illegal. Go ahead, tune them up." You know, America has lost its moral compass.

#Wilkerson

I agree with Larry that this has been a trait of the American way of war for a long time. In fact, the last commander—really going way back—who actually made it an edict among his forces was George Washington. He said they would not be like their enemy, in this case the British, who treated prisoners really badly—hanging them, castrating them, and doing many of the things the British did. They would be a very different kind of soldier, because they were fighting to prove that a different kind of soldier could exist under Washington and still win. Now, they had the French and everything else, and we all know the history of that victory.

But nonetheless, that was the last commander who was really serious—and his aides were serious—about making sure Americans were different from the Hessians and from the British regulars. Ever since then, we've been fighting Native Americans, for example, with a bloodlust that was incredible. In our own Civil War, we had Nathan Bedford Forrest, who massacred Black soldiers simply because they were Black and wearing a Union uniform at Fort Pillow. And you can go on, as Larry did—you can go to Vietnam, you can go to Korea, or back to Korea, up to Vietnam and forward—and you can find all these occasions. In the Philippines, we massacred people in a ditch with a machine gun.

Teddy Roosevelt even complimented the general until it proved politically inexpedient to do so, and then he had to reverse himself. We've done this sort of thing. But I'll take exception to the fact that the president of the United States has been involved viscerally—in supporting and approving the policy that allows this sort of thing, and then executing it. That begins with George W. Bush and John Yoo and David Addington's opinion on torture being defined as anything just short of organ failure. And then everyone—from soft contractors to the CIA, CIA contractors, and others in Afghanistan, Iraq, and in secret prisons elsewhere—actually killed 33 people, the ultimate torture, if you will.

They murdered 33 people with presidential approval—formal approval. That was a first. And that's when the slippery slope, I think, that we're on now really began, as Larry said. We're on the slope now that says, for example, you've got a guy who bails out of a burning airplane, he's hanging under his canopy, and you come in and machine-gun him—which happened in World War II, but it was a war crime. Or you've got someone like, in this case, someone the other day was saying this was simply a "double tap" operation. They did it purposefully. You know, a double tap is when you kill them in one event, hoping that someone will come to observe it, and then you kill that person too.

I think that's a mischaracterization of this. This is a war crime. The judge is right. It's serious because we've gotten to this point through a visceral disregard for the Constitution of the United States of America—commencing at the presidential level with George W. Bush and carried on, as Larry said, through every president since, up to Donald Trump, who frankly doesn't give a damn. And we're taking ourselves to a point where not only are we eviscerating our own Constitution, we're eviscerating everything we've stood for since 1945 and '48, when Geneva codified the Nuremberg Tribunal in many respects—and destroying it. Destroying it. It will come back to haunt us.

#Danny

A major meltdown is happening right now in the Trump administration over this. Here's Pete Hegseth's recent meltdown in response to questions about the war crimes probe.

#Representative 2

Because the thing was on fire—it exploded in fire and smoke. You can't see anything. You've got digital feeds; this is called the fog of war. This is what you and the press don't understand. You sit in your air-conditioned offices or up on Capitol Hill, and you nitpick, and you plant fake stories in the Washington Post about "kill everybody" phrases from anonymous sources—not based on anything, not based on any truth at all. And then you want to throw out really irresponsible terms about American heroes, about the judgment they made. I wrote a whole book on this topic because of what politicians and the press do to warfighters. President Trump has empowered commanders—commanders to do what is necessary, which is dark and difficult things in the dead of night on behalf of the American people. We support them, and we will stop the poisoning of the American people.

#Danny

But where does this all fit into this larger war being drummed up? Because the whole “drug boat” strikes—it’s been all about Venezuela.

#Larry Johnson

The claim of combating so-called narco-terrorists is just an excuse—a false justification for trying to find a way to control the oil and put someone in charge of Venezuela who’ll be a compliant puppet of the United States. If this were really about stopping the flow of drugs, then Donald Trump wouldn’t have pardoned the former president of Honduras, who was serving time for moving massive amounts of narcotics into the United States. He also wouldn’t have pardoned Henry Cuellar, a former congressman from South Texas, who was involved in taking serious money from drug traffickers in Mexico.

So, you know, Trump’s not consistent on this at all. But again, we’re sort of caught militarily right now. I’ve likened it to somebody who’s ever fired a conventional bow and arrow—when you draw that bow back and hold it, see how long you can hold it. You’re in a cocked position, ready to fire. Well, that’s what this U.S. force is off the coast of Venezuela, except they’ve been there going on four months now, I think. And I think this is not a military force capable of defeating the Venezuelan army.

Uh, it’s a force capable of inflicting some damage on Venezuela, but, you know, just to put it into context—we went into Afghanistan after 2001 with about 140,000 troops. That was the U.S. presence once we got fully ramped up. And we were unable, with 140,000 troops, to control or contain the Taliban and other insurgents in Afghanistan. We got forced out. We turned tail and ran. We tried to be more diplomatic in describing our exit, but that’s exactly what happened. We like to say, “Well, the Brits lost too.” Yeah. I mean, the Russians lost too. Yeah.

In the 1980s, the Russians were there with far fewer—about 120,000 troops, not 140,000. When we invaded Iraq in 2003, we had 130,000 troops, and we were unable to quell the opposition in the country. There was an active insurgency. We killed a lot of Iraqis, but that didn’t stop the insurgents. And ultimately, we again declared victory and left—sort of. We’ve still got this huge compound, the Green Zone, built in the middle of Baghdad. So my point is, here we’ve got 18,000 troops supposedly offshore, ready to spring into action. But when you consider the fact that Venezuela is, you know, twice the size—three times the size—of Vietnam...

Uh, and its terrain is as rugged as anything in Vietnam, with mountains and canopy jungle. During the Vietnam War, we had to worry about one long border on the west side of Vietnam. Now you’ve got a much longer border—along Brazil to the south and west, and Colombia to the north and west. So, essentially, uncontrolled borders. You know, if we launch airstrikes, the Venezuelans actually have a more capable air defense system—thanks to their support from Russia, China, and Iran—than

the Houthis did. That's number one. They have far more military forces that can disperse into the jungle and run insurgencies. So, God help us if we try to put any troops on the ground—they're going to get chewed up. They'll suffer serious losses.

So, you know, I think what Trump was—well, I think their plan was really to try to use intimidation and posturing, hoping this would convince a few of the commanders in the Venezuelan army to say, "Let's join the gringos, because Maduro's getting us into trouble." I actually think what's happened over the last four months has had the reverse effect. Instead of widening the fissure between the pro-Maduro forces and the anti-Maduro forces, it's actually brought some people who were anti-Maduro more onto Maduro's side now, because they're sick and tired of U.S. bullying. So it's a mess. And you can't keep this force deployed like this without, at some point, having to say, "Okay, return to base." It's just—like I said—holding that bow cocked is going to cause a degradation in muscle, and it'll fatigue you.

#Danny

I mean, the Donald Trump administration has seemingly backed itself into a corner. It feels a lot like Iran, in the sense that there have been constant threats—constant threats—but this time there's also a major buildup, even more significant on the U.S. side, at least, than what we saw against Iran. And if U.S. troops do end up needing to go in—whether it's special forces or ground troops—they're going to have to contend not only with the Venezuelan military, but also with ordinary people who've been training there: students, grandmothers. There are pictures of them with rifles and other weapons, preparing to counter a possible attack.

Now, the numbers, according to some, are that there are about eight million of these kinds of people. That changes a lot about what could be done, right, Larry? Because casualties—even relatively small ones, not to make anyone's death insignificant; murder in war is murder—but the ratio, for example, of Iraqi to U.S. losses, even that created major pressure on the U.S. to stop doing what it was doing. This could be even worse than that if ground troops go in, and maybe worse and faster in terms of the numbers. What are your thoughts on this?

#Larry Johnson

If we force a change in the government, and it's basically seen as handpicked by the United States, there will be an insurgency in Venezuela. That'll be very, very difficult to stop, simply because of the nature of the terrain and the openness of the borders with Brazil and Colombia. Most people who aren't familiar with the area don't understand that, like in Colombia, where they've had an aggressive anti-insurgency campaign for years, the FARC—the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—have been operating for more than 50 years.

And, you know, the Colombian army, with U.S. assistance, tried to wipe them out, tried to defeat them, tried to negotiate. I mean, it's—you know—and actually, some of the negotiations worked up

to a point. You've had another group, the ERP, the E-R-P, and again, they failed to wipe them out in Colombia. So the notion that this could be easily settled with U.S. assistance—forget about it. You'd just get the United States embroiled in another, you know, "let's start off as a peacekeeping mission" that turns into another war we didn't need to fight.

#Danny

Yeah, and there are major divisions even within the Trump camp about the very basis for why that's happening—going back to the war crimes scandal. Here's what was played on Fox News recently: a very heated exchange between what usually is, or at least is supposed to be, the administration's media arm.

#Journalist 2

The best-case scenario is that Admiral Bradley, the one they're trying to put all the blame on, authorized the second lethal strike that killed those people—which, again, was a violation of the law. We also know the U.S. doesn't always do this, because there was another strike in the Caribbean back in September where a Colombian and an Ecuadorian survived, and we repatriated them. We didn't even take them to court here for the crimes we knew they'd committed; we sent them back to their home countries. There's tons of reporting now. You want to call The Washington Post fake news? That's fine. The New York Times, by the way, didn't exonerate them.

We also have The Wall Street Journal saying that a DOD official stated that Hegseth was the, quote, "target engagement authority"—so, the guy in charge. We also know, writ large, that the story about this administration being focused on eradicating drugs from American society is absolute BS, because Donald Trump went and pardoned—he's walking free now—the former Honduran president who trafficked 400 tons of cocaine into America. Why did he get to leave prison early? He had a 45-year sentence. By the way, the Trump administration originally prosecuted him, but he got out because Roger Stone is his buddy, and because he wrote Donald Trump a letter calling him "Your Excellency" and saying they shared conservative values. The problem is, the story keeps changing every ten minutes. It went from "fake news" to "the frog shooting narco-terrorists" to—well, to this. So, yes.

#Danny

So, you know, there are obviously major disagreements over the very basis for that. It feels like WMD all over again. But back then, there was this—what do you call it—the surprise of these new, kind of drummed-up threats that many Americans maybe weren't ready for. But it's already happened. And this feels like 2.0—it's happening again. Even Fox News is having debates about it, which is a bit unprecedented.

#Larry Johnson

Well, it was still—I mean, that was Jessica Tarlov. She's the token lefty on the panel. But I actually agreed with everything she said, because the blatant hypocrisy of the Trump administration is—again, it's all predicated on this false belief that, oh, all we've got to do to stop drug trafficking is kill a bunch of people overseas. One of my business partners, when he was chief of international ops at the DEA, came up with a program called the Kingpin Program. Now, it wasn't so much about killing the top leaders of the cartels; it was more about capturing them, arresting them, incarcerating them.

It was based on the assumption that if we take out the top level, the whole organization will collapse. But what they discovered was that drug trafficking cartels are more like balls of mercury. If you've ever had a ball of mercury and hit it with a hammer—what happens? It shatters into a hundred pieces, and each one is still intact. That's exactly what happened when we went after the first one, the Pablo Escobar organization—when I say “we,” I mean the U.S. government—as well as when we went after the Sinaloa cartel in Mexico, the Cali cartel in Colombia, and the Knights Templar. What we found was, yeah, you might arrest some top-level people, but they reorganize quickly. There are always underlings willing to step up. There's a lot of money to be made.

And the reality is, there are a lot of U.S. corporations and financial institutions that profit enormously from the drug business. And just as we've seen, Trump's got very selective outrage about this. Just because you're a buddy of Roger Stone, you get a walk—even though you trafficked 400 tons of cocaine, which I'm sure killed more than one or two people. And then again, this thing with Henry Cuellar—Cuellar's been receiving money from Mexican drug cartels for years. So it's unfortunate, but it's a lie. And actually, I think this thing is going to have some traction, because there are also Republicans outraged by it. Particularly in the Pentagon, what they're saying is, “Hey, they're trying to hang this on all of us.”

Now, that said, I have little sympathy for any of the officers in this chain of command who carried out these illegal orders. These are illegal orders. You don't—just because the president says it's okay to go kill somebody—the president does not have the constitutional authority to order the murder of anyone. What he can do, if he wants to declare war on a country where you can then go kill their soldiers, is go to Congress. Congress says, “Yeah, we want to go to war, we want to go kill these people.” Then you have the authority to at least engage in war, which includes killing civilians—not recommended, but we did it in World War II. But not this. This is Trump acting unilaterally, outside of presidential authority.

#Danny

Do you find that the Trump administration right now—I've been thinking this over—is its only option with Venezuela some kind of Iran-style flyover, drop bombs, claim victory? Because more and more, I mean, we've heard so many reports that Maduro is on shaky ground. All these fake reports that he's about to go to Qatar, all these fake reports that he was giving Trump everything. And meanwhile, he's dancing in the streets and talking about how they're going to defend the country with

everything they have. It appears it's going to be a lot harder to topple Nicolás Maduro and that government than was originally advertised. And there are all the consequences that come from a direct military intervention. Is this the only option Trump has right now? Because obviously the U.S. is going to have to act, with all this talk, if it's going to save any face.

#Larry Johnson

Maybe, you know, the ideal solution would be to get Simon Cowell from **America's Got Talent**—previously **American Idol**—and Howie Mandel, and then, you know...

#Danny

Really bringing it back with Simon Cowell.

#Larry Johnson

Let's get, like, an **America's Got Talent** panel and have Maduro and Trump do a dance-off, okay? And then the audience gets to vote. I think Maduro would win that one—he's got better moves, you know. But maybe that could become the recipe for settling future conflicts. Less bloody, less—well, you know—it might be painful to watch, but there'd be a lot less grief. Look, I say that tongue in cheek, but this is the problem—it doesn't start with Donald Trump. The problem with America is we've become accustomed to killing people and just walking away like it's not our problem. When you look at how many Vietnamese we killed, you know, maybe the only positive thing out of the Vietnam War is that we've got some great Vietnamese restaurants here in the United States now. But the lives that were destroyed—we're talking upward of probably a million, at least.

#Danny

At least a couple.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah. So it is—we've done it there. Then it's Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Serbia, Libya. We did a little bit in Panama. So, you know, we've got to stop. We just have to stop. We've got too much war, and we're spending all this money overseas while our own cities are crumbling. And, you know, we've got significant needs here in the United States. But we are enamored with war. You know, people—by God—they buy the propaganda each and every time. And so far, it looks like most have bought into this stuff about narco-terrorism and, by God, we've got to kill them. It makes us feel good. But it's never been proven that that actually solves the problem.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. And when I was in Vietnam with the vets, to watch what they have to do to get any kind of support for Vietnam after all the absolute devastation that U.S. bombs, unexploded ordnance, Agent Orange—all of that—did to the Vietnamese people. What they have to do just to get a little bit of support for that is a lot of work, which shows that the U.S. is not apologetic. The U. S.—at least the political class—they're not apologetic. The warmongers don't reflect and say, "Oh, well, maybe we should do better and take care of things here." No, they don't do that.

#Larry Johnson

We make money off it. It's a profitable activity. It's shameful, but that's the truth.