

# Russia Will Retaliate After Attack on Putin's Residence

Larry Johnson is a former intelligence analyst at the CIA who also worked at the US State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Johnson outlines why the attack on Putin's residence was a bridge too far. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glenndiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: [https://x.com/Glenn\\_Diesen](https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen) Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

## #Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We're here with Larry Johnson, former intelligence analyst for the CIA, who also worked at the U.S. State Department's Office of Counterterrorism. Thank you, as always, for coming back on the program. Always honored by the invite, Doc. So, Russia says that Ukraine has now attacked Putin's residence with 91 drones. They didn't reach their target, but that was what they were aiming for—an attempt on the life of the Russian president. Zelenskyy counters this, saying these are lies, a Russian false flag or a fake. How are you reading this situation?

## #Larry Johnson

If it were a Russian false flag or a fake, the West would be able to provide intelligence immediately—proving that they haven't done so. The fact that no such evidence has been provided, coupled with Russia's insistence that it happened and the international support Russia is getting from China, India, and other countries, tells me this was a failed attempt—let's put it that way—because it would be easy to disprove otherwise. So I think it did happen. For me, the most important part of this is the timing of the event. The Russians claimed it started sometime late on the evening of the 28th and ended early in the morning of the 29th. Well, late in the evening on the 28th would be something like 10 p.m. or 11 p.m.

Moscow time. But even if we say it's midnight Moscow time, that's 4 p.m. at Mar-a-Lago, where Zelensky is meeting with Trump. I don't think Zelensky is cynical enough or stupid enough to be in talks with Trump about trying to end the war—even if he doesn't really want to end it—and then authorize this kind of attack on Putin. I mean, it's a little bit like, you know, the Japanese delegation meeting with the Secretary of War or Secretary of State on the morning of December 7th, 1941, in Washington, D.C., while the attack is unfolding out in Hawaii. You know, that kind of parallel situation. So I interpret this as something we can look at a couple of different ways.

Either Zelensky knew he authorized it and was just sending a message of, "Hey, I'm a tough guy, and we're not going to give in to these Russians," or it was done deliberately to embarrass Zelensky. It could have been carried out by political opponents in Kyiv—of which there are several. I haven't seen any credible evidence indicating that Putin was actually at the residence in Novgorod. The fact that Putin has been squirreled away in the Kremlin apartment for most of the last four years was precisely to avoid this kind of risk—that he could be at a residence and be attacked. So that's why it comes across to me not so much as an attempt to kill Putin, even though that's how the Russians are playing it, and that's how it's been, you know, from the Russian side's message to the rest of the world.

But it certainly was sending a message from the Ukrainian side that they're not interested in peaceful negotiations with Putin. You know, Glenn, the real irony here—and I think you understand this better than most—is that within the political spectrum in Moscow, Vladimir Putin is on the mild, calm side of the ledger. I mean, he's not known for being an aggressive, violent, threatening, or emotional kind of guy. Whereas, you know, someone like Dmitry Medvedev has a much hotter temper. He has the luxury of saying what he thinks; Putin often doesn't. So the fact that the Ukrainians want to kill a guy who's actually been somewhat restrained in going after Ukraine just seems completely paradoxical.

## **#Glenn**

Well, this whole idea of a false flag is a recurring theme. I've heard it throughout the past four years. We were told that Nord Stream was simply Russia attacking its own energy infrastructure. We were told that, with the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant under Russian control, the Russians were continuously bombing the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant—which they themselves controlled. We saw that when the Kremlin was attacked by drones, that was also called a false flag. One after another, they always tell these stories that are easy to debunk shortly afterward, or even during. So, I'm a bit critical every time they make up these stories. But I saw this video interview with Alexey Arestovich.

I'm not sure if you've seen it yet. I've heard a little bit about it. He put up a clip of it on my Twitter, because in it he argues that it's not just a residence—that there's also a nuclear command center there, and that this would also have been a target. He also warned that an attack on Russia's nuclear command center would authorize the Russian nuclear doctrine to use a nuclear strike in retaliation. Now, I'm not saying that Russia is going down this path. Indeed, I'm very certain this is not in the cards. But, you know, this isn't the gospel either—this is just what Arestovich is arguing. Nonetheless, it does look like a massive provocation of...

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, well, in fact, I hadn't heard that in its full context. And candidly, that may explain the intense reaction from the Russian side. What I found puzzling is that the Russians didn't react this strongly

when the Ukrainians hit the Kremlin two years ago—and Putin was at the Kremlin then. Russia didn't respond with the kind of visible anger we're hearing now from people like Lavrov, Peskov, and others. So the fact that, in addition to being an official residence for Putin, it might also be the location of a command center—it would make sense that if the president were going to be there, he'd want to be able to go into a bunker or something and direct Russia's nuclear forces.

So that may be why they're reacting so strongly. And, you know, it's not like this is the first time. We've had a series of incidents going back—was it 2023?—with the attack on the Crocus Theater, the government center, the killing of Daria Dugina, Alexander Dugin's daughter, the assassination of that journalist—I forget his name—but he was given a gift, a statuette that blew up and killed him. There have been at least three generals assassinated with car bombs. So those are all acts of terror. Then there was the attack on the Kerch Bridge, which the Ukrainians initially denied. So it's not like this has just now crossed some new line.

You know, there's something that happened here that represents crossing a line that, up to this point, Russia has shrugged off. And it now looks like they're not going to shrug it off. I just heard that there was a motion put forward in the Duma, the Russian legislature, to transform this from a "special military operation" to a war—to actually issue a declaration of war. And that would be significant. People think that when Russia says "special military operation," it's just a word game. It is not a word game. It changes how Russia mobilizes and how resources are prioritized within the country for a war effort. So, you know, this is moving in a very dangerous direction.

## **#Glenn**

I agree. Well, I keep hearing from Moscow too that the sentiment there is really—well, the heat is really going up. There are a lot of angry people who would like to see a fiercer response. I always make the point that in a proxy war, the rules are somewhat unwritten. And it seems that over the past few years, those unwritten rules of proxy wars have continuously been changed and pushed. What was considered acceptable back in 2022—we crossed that line a long time ago. I always point to Biden saying that F-16s were not possible, that it would mean World War III. Compare that to today, when you have, for example, American contractors launching American attack teams guided by American satellites, hitting targets chosen by American intelligence agents in Ukraine, as part of a wider war plan coordinated by U.S. generals working out of Germany.

I mean, this is... I had a talk with John Mearsheimer on this channel as well. He made the same point. We crossed out of a proxy war a long time ago. We're fighting a direct war against the Russians. We made a decision to take the war from Ukraine into Russian territory. Now, the voices growing in Moscow seem to be saying, you know, why should they bring a war to us? Why shouldn't we also bring the war to European territory then? It's a bit ludicrous that one side can essentially attack us while claiming it's just the Ukrainians defending themselves, as opposed to NATO countries

using Ukraine as a proxy. But do you also see foreign involvement in this? I ask because back in June, you remember, the Russian FSB said that the attack on Russia's nuclear deterrent—that is, its nuclear bombers—was carried out with British support.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Have you seen anything? I not only believe that British intelligence was involved in this, but I also can't rule out the possibility of the CIA being involved as well. I raise that because there are still elements in the CIA working against Donald Trump, and I think they have a vested interest in keeping the war in Ukraine going. One of the reasons I say that is because recently—a woman, someone I thought was a friend once—she was in my career trainee class. When I joined the CIA in September 1985, I was one of 53 other officers, men and women, and we spent about a year getting special training and orientation to the agency.

Her name is Susan Miller. I was just scanning TV about four weeks ago, and all of a sudden, there she is—on Afshin Rattansi's podcast. One of his producers had reached out to her, and she agreed to go on the program. But before that, she was on a CNN show in July of this year, and it turns out she was the one in charge of the team that drafted the intelligence assessment accusing Russia of meddling and interfering in the U.S. elections—the one that came out in January 2017, which Tulsi Gabbard has debunked. And there was Susan on CNN defending it, saying, "Oh yeah, we had all this evidence." What a joke.

My point is, she's not out there on her own doing this—I guarantee it. She was not the type of person who aspired to public recognition or naturally gravitated toward being on the media. She's been put out there, and in a way that directly opposes the Trump administration on this. So that's why I say, in a long answer coming back to it, I cannot rule out the fact that there are elements within the CIA that are intent on saying, "Screw Trump. We're not going to abandon the Ukrainians. We're going to continue to supply and help them. And if taking out Putin is one of the ways to do it, we'll do that." I cannot rule that out.

## **#Glenn**

Because such a daring attack—also in the middle of the talks between Zelensky and Trump—it's hard to see how this isn't related to derailing any efforts to end the war. But again, someone is trying to do that here. Now, of course, we hear from the Ukrainian side that this is just the Russians, that they're looking for an excuse to walk away from the talks and intensify the bombing. I was going to ask how you assess that accusation, but maybe...

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah. So, I mean, what's the evidence that the Russians, quote, want to walk away? They've already made their position very clear. They're uncompromising on it. And it is those five territories—Crimea,

Zaporizhia, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk. They're ours. They belong to the Russian Federation. They're not going back. We're not making any concessions on that. Now, yeah, is there a harder position than that? Yeah. The harder position is, "We're also going to take Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Poltava, and Sumy—and screw you and the horse you rode in on." Yeah, that would be a harder position. But Putin's already made it clear that if they don't take the deal that's on the table now, that's going to be the next deal.

That will be tougher. So Russia doesn't need an excuse to do that—they're already doing it. That's what's so crazy about it. They're just trying to come up with an excuse not to continue with the negotiations. The Russians said they're willing to negotiate, but they've laid out their terms. Putin did it on June 14th, 2024, and he's repeated it ad nauseam for more than a year now. And the West still doesn't get it. So that's why this notion that Russia is trying to create a pretext so it doesn't have to negotiate doesn't make sense. They've already said they're willing to negotiate, but on their terms, and they haven't deviated from that at all.

## **#Glenn**

So, given that we're now faced with this massive escalation—the Russians are not just indicating but saying flat out that they will retaliate—they see this with extreme severity and have already picked their targets. So what do you think Russia will actually do now? You mentioned the possibility, of course, of declaring a war, which would mean they'd be fighting very differently. But what else do you think might be in the cards?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, they've been hesitant to use the Avangard. They used the Avangard missile at one point. The Avangard gives them, let's call it, the destructive capability of a nuclear weapon without the radiation and collateral damage. It's like being able to launch—let's say—a conventional nuclear bomb is more like a shotgun shell with birdshot: when you fire it, it spreads out, it's hard to concentrate. You can kill in a very precise area. The Avangard is more like a sniper's bullet—it's very precise.

So I could see them destroying the intelligence headquarters—both the civilian and military ones—for starters. If they know of any particular bases where there are NATO or British personnel, they could destroy those, hit them with an Iskander. So it's going to be more than just launching a new number of missiles, drones, and FABs, because they're doing that every day. You know, it's tough to tell—is that escalation? One day you drop 800, the next day you drop 1,000? Yeah, well, that's 200 more. But I think they're going to go after a target that really sends a message.

And it may include killing some of the top political officials and military leaders. Up to this point, Russia has not done that. Ukraine has done it over and over again. Russia hasn't. This may be where Russia says, "OK, the gloves are now off. All of these people are targets," and they'll start killing

them. But I don't think the Russians were just issuing an idle threat. They don't do that. When they say this, it means they've already picked a time, place, and method of retaliation. So they've given some thought to this beforehand—within a plan—like, “If we have to escalate, this is the next step up.” And that's where we're at, I think.

## **#Glenn**

If this were the only miscalculation, if you will, it would be one thing. But it kind of builds into all these other waves we've seen, especially over the past months. We've seen, especially since the summertime, when the Ukrainian army began to very evidently fall apart, everything from attacks not just on Russian refineries but on civilian vessels. And they all have the same thing in common—that they suggest an escalation in the war. But it's also very hard to imagine many of these things being done without external support, that is, from some NATO countries. But again, my concern is always, as we go up the escalation ladder, at what point will the Russians see that not responding is more dangerous than responding, in terms of risking a direct war? Do you think a direct war could be an undesirable consequence of this situation? Oh, yeah.

## **#Larry Johnson**

No, I think it's Germany, France, and the UK. The UK in particular is playing with nuclear fire, potentially. What I find so odd—and you're closer to it than I am, by virtue of where you live—is what appears to be the sincere, genuine belief on the part of many, if not most, European leaders that Russia really is weak militarily, that its economy is fragile and not very productive, and that Putin is desperate to get out of this, or that Russia really is intent on conquering Europe. Now, the entire narrative there is contradictory, because if the Russian military is so weak, then how could they conquer Europe? So they have to figure out what the narrative is: either Russia is so strong and powerful it's going to gobble up Europe, or it's weak and inept and therefore we can threaten it.

And I don't understand—those are two contradictory positions held simultaneously by, like I said, many European leaders, particularly in Germany, France, and the UK. And out of that kind of false perception, they can make decisions differently, decisions that could stumble them into a war. This isn't going to be a conscious “yeah, we want to go to war” necessarily, but once you convince yourself of something that's not true and you act on it, bad things can follow. It's like if I came to you and said, “Hey, Glenn, I've got this pair of bird wings. I want you to put them on, wave your arms real fast, and I'm going to push you off a 50-story building. You'll fly, trust me.” And it turns out I'm not an aerodynamic engineer—and you'd find that the laws of gravity take over real quick.

So no matter what I told you, and how much you believed it, the underlying facts weren't true. And that's the situation we face right now. I was just listening to Doug McGregor a little bit ago, and he said that Putin has now mobilized an additional 700,000 reservists. On top of that, he's announced 140,000 new conscripts. That's in addition to a ground force already in Ukraine of around 750,000. So right now you're looking at Russia's active ground force approaching two million men. They're

preparing—preparing for the contingency of going to war with Europe. That’s what’s taking place. Europe keeps talking tough, but I don’t see them actually making substantive preparations, actions that match their words.

## **#Glenn**

But if the objective for Zelensky and the Europeans is to pull the Americans deeper into this—that is, to persuade Trump not to either try to end the war or hand it off to the Europeans, but instead to get America pulled in—how do you see that as a possible pathway based on recent events? Because Trump seemed to take a very strong stance against this. But again, you never know what’s rhetoric and how much he actually knew in advance. Even the Financial Times had an article suggesting that Zelensky’s goal would be something along the lines of trying to get Trump on their side, so they could at least put pressure on Putin. So this is essentially as good as it gets—just trying to get the United States involved. And the Europeans haven’t really shied away from making it clear that this should be the goal: to put the Americans back on the front line against the Russians. Do you see a pathway there?

## **#Larry Johnson**

No, no, there is no pathway. In fact, that’s what was so important about the meeting between Zelensky and Trump on Sunday. Trump made it very clear afterward that no, we’re not going to declare a ceasefire. No, I’m not offering up a bunch of new money to Zelensky. No, we’re not going to be putting—well, there’s no deadline. The concrete things Zelensky wanted, he didn’t get. I was also fascinated, though, by Trump. Instead of talking so disparagingly about the Europeans as he normally does, he was very, “Oh, they’re great people. Oh, they’re wonderful leaders. Oh, they’re just top, they’re the best.” You know, he was rubbing butter on their ass—just saying the nice words, but not matching them with action. And the reaction out of Europe to what Trump said has been pretty angry.

And like, you know, what the hell? So I think the Europeans realize they’ve got to go their own way—that Trump’s not with them on this, and that the odds they can somehow entrap Trump with something are pretty slim. That’s what made this attack on Putin, or the Putin residence, on Sunday going into Monday so crazy. Because again, I think it was done deliberately to derail the peace process. And I also think it was part of a broader move to get rid of Zelensky. Zelensky’s usefulness has passed. You know, he was good to go as president because he was seen as a guy who could go out and raise money. People liked him—short, little guy, kind of kindly—and, you know, he could play the piano with his penis, that kind of thing. And he was getting money. The money was flowing in.

And once it flowed in, it was flowing back out—at least \$48 billion and maybe upwards of \$110 billion. But his money-making days are over, it looks like, particularly with the United States. There are other reports that General Zaluzhny, who was sort of exiled to London as the ostensible

Ukrainian ambassador to the U.K., is now headed back this week—Friday or Saturday—to Kyiv. So, is there a possibility he could be put into office as Zelensky is encouraged to retire? Possibly. We'll see. What's clear right now is that Europe is in chaos and Ukraine is in chaos. They don't know what to do. And when you're faced with situations like that, it's not surprising they'd lash out with something as outlandish and dangerous as trying to attack a residence where Putin might have been.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I've seen that now. I think his statement also signaled he wanted to quit his position as ambassador. And, well, I'm kind of going with that assumption when it's time for Zelensky to depart. A lot of his inner circle has been pulled apart, so his position is obviously quite weakened— even more so now, with this corruption being linked to him as well. But...

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, who do you think is pulling the strings? The way I see it, Zelensky's not the guy in charge. He's the front man, the chief puppet. It's like the organ grinder and the monkey on a string—he cranks the organ, and the monkey dances. Zelensky's the dancing monkey. The question is, who's the organ grinder, or who are the organ grinders? I believe the Right Sector—these ultra-nationalists who've been described as neo-Nazis—their leadership are the key ones directing the effort.

And what makes Zaluzhny a more attractive person to them is that Zaluzhny is ideologically aligned with them—much more so than Zelensky. Zelensky was just a latecomer to this party. And frankly, I don't think those ultra-nationalists, the ones so closely aligned with Bandera and so on, have any trust or confidence in Zelensky. They may well have been behind this attack on Putin, both as a way to embarrass Zelensky and maybe, if they'd pulled it off and got Putin, they'd say, "Okay, now our problem's solved," which is, you know, a foolish analysis on their part.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I think if Putin were killed, the consequences... I mean, there would be no restraints anymore. That would be extremely, extremely dangerous.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Yeah, yeah.

## **#Glenn**

But what do you make of the overall meeting now between Trump and Zelensky? Because, as we know, Trump has been going back and forth. He's positioning himself as this mediator and peacemaker, but the U.S. is still very much deeply involved in this war. After a year, it's hard to take



Trump seriously when he says, "Oh, well, it's Biden's war, not mine." I mean, he hasn't really done anything—well, not anything, that's not true—but he could have pulled the United States out of this thing, and he hasn't done that. So I was wondering how he would have acted in this meeting with Zelensky. I thought he wouldn't swing completely back to Zelensky like he's done in the past, because there are no cards left to play. Things are falling apart. But what do you make of this?

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, let's start with the fact that they were apparently discussing Zelensky's 20-point peace plan. Russia has rejected that plan out of hand—it's not even a starting point. So, you know, Zelensky and Trump are negotiating over a 20-point plan that's no longer relevant. They might as well be sitting down and saying, "Hey, let's see if we can create a unicorn in a laboratory." You know, it's not going to happen. So it was a much more cordial meeting. I did find it noteworthy at the press conference that Trump talked about setting up working groups. And, boy, his working group had everybody—Witkoff, Kushner, Marco Rubio, Pete Hegseth—you know, everybody. There'd be nobody left in Washington to work. And invariably, if they do set up such a working group, those are long-term negotiations that go on for a while.

And while that's happening, the Russian military advance is accelerating, not slowing down. They're moving very, very rapidly, especially in Zaporozhye. Ukraine doesn't have any real defense network there, so the Russians could have the city of Zaporozhye surrounded, maybe as soon as the end of February. They're moving that fast. So the meeting wasn't a PR disaster like that February Oval Office press conference where Trump and J.D. Vance got into it with Zelensky. But Zelensky didn't come away with anything concrete—no sense of, "OK, we've got a path forward. Here's the map, here's how we're going to beat Russia." There is no path forward. That's the problem.

## **#Glenn**

This is what's confusing about the peace agreement. It's not as if they share a similar idea of what peace should look like but just can't agree on some minor issues. As the Trump administration said, "We already agreed on 90%." But what they want is the exact opposite. For Russia, the source of this war—the reason there's a war—is simply that NATO tried to pull Ukraine into its orbit and use it as a proxy against them. So, given that this is the source of the war, peace demands that Ukraine restore its neutrality: no NATO membership, no NATO troops in Ukraine, no Western intelligence services in Ukraine, and no missiles or other weapon systems in Ukraine. They also say there have to be territorial concessions—in other words, Istanbul plus.

But for Ukraine and the Europeans, it's not just a different version—it's the exact opposite. This war, according to them, started because the Russians woke up one day and decided they wanted to restore the Soviet Union or the Russian Empire. Right? Therefore, peace means that Ukraine should ideally join NATO at some point, or at least be aligned with NATO. They want European troops in Ukraine. They want this 800,000-man peacetime army, which can only be sustained with NATO's

assistance. And of course, no territorial concessions—at least no pullout from Donbass. So what is there to talk about then? Because this is— I mean, I see Trump saying, “Well, we’re going to invest a lot of money in Ukraine, we’re going to do deals with the Russians.” But for the Russians and the Ukrainians, a lot of this is seen as existential.

For the Ukrainians, they fear that if they lose these territories—if they have no protection—they would wither away under Russian pressure. For the Russians, they say NATO in Ukraine is an existential threat. I mean, this is why it was so dangerous when NATO threatened or promised to expand back in 2008. It triggered a security competition we can’t escape from now. Before 2014, no one in Russia talked about taking Crimea. Now, here we are. So there’s no solution to this anymore. What exactly are these negotiations meant to achieve? It just looks like the Russians are laying the groundwork for a demand for capitulation, because it seems like one side will have to capitulate—and it’s usually the winning side, irrespective of what the EU thinks.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, let's go back and look at the impetus for this latest round of peace talks. It didn't originate in Moscow—it originated with the United States. Why? Because there's a growing realization that the Ukrainians are losing and there's no way they're going to win. So they're trying to find some way to defuse that by getting the Russians to make concessions, à la Minsk II, where instead of Russia finishing the Ukrainians off, it gives them a respite to rearm, refit, retrain, and regroup. It's the whole reprogram thing.

Russia has played along with this, I think, for the simple reason of wanting better relations with the United States—to at least get things back on the same kind of footing that existed during the Cold War, when even though Soviet troops were being used in Vietnam to kill U.S. soldiers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union still talked, still held regular consultations, still negotiated agreements. I think that's where Putin and Lavrov want to go. Settling the war in Ukraine, you know, I don't think they see that as a realistic possibility. Because, as you correctly noted, it's not like both sides have agreed to buy a Lamborghini and now they're just arguing over what color and what kind of leather trim to have inside, okay?

This is like—they may have agreed that each side wants transportation. The Russians want it in a rocket ship, and the Ukrainians want it with a horse and buggy. Now, maybe all they've agreed on so far is a color. Red—red, okay, we agree, red. But there are a lot of other details that have to be hammered out, because a spaceship is quite different from a horse-drawn cart. And you don't bridge that by each side making concessions. The predicate of the Western approach, particularly on the Trump side, is the notion that if we can just get Russia to agree to these three things and make some concessions, that'll solve the war. That's not what this war is about. That's the thing that Putin keeps calling the root cause: NATO expansion to the east. Period. That's the cause.

## **#Glenn**

So, given that this is where we are, diplomacy is seemingly going nowhere. The conflict is escalating dramatically at a time when things are falling apart. These are desperate times—desperate times. People tend to do stupid things. The losing side can do stupid things; the winning side can perhaps get too bold. And miscalculations happen. So, do you have any predictions? Not looking into a crystal ball, but based on how you see developments going, what do you expect to see over the next few months, into 2026?

## **#Larry Johnson**

I hope that Russia's retaliation for this failed drone attack on the presidential residence will be significant enough to force European leaders to back down, rethink their position, and then open a genuine channel of negotiations with Russia. I think Putin would accept a deal that leaves Ukraine intact, with access to the Black Sea. But it would mean no NATO troops, no security guarantees from Europe, no massive Ukrainian force. Barring that—if that kind of agreement isn't available or forthcoming—I see, in 2026, Russia taking Kyiv, Odessa, Mykolaiv, and controlling Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy, Poltava, and Kharkiv.

They will effectively control all territory east of the Dnieper River by the end of 2026. Ukraine will be politically and economically unable to return to an industrial state of any importance. It'll become an agricultural nation, heavily dependent on Russia to export its grain. I also think, in that context, the West will be gripped by an economic crisis that will further constrain what it can do militarily. And in that kind of situation, out of that weakness, Europe may be tempted to lash out at Russia. So the potential for this escalating into a shooting war beyond the boundaries of Ukraine, I think, is significant.

## **#Glenn**

I don't think the European leaders know what they're doing here, because they keep making this point that war might be better than a bad peace. That's essentially the sentiment. You hear it from Finland, from the Baltic states, from Denmark, even from the German intelligence chief—they're all saying the same thing: that we don't need a bad peace, and it's better just to continue this. But as you said, if this war continues and the Russians take Odessa because there's no diplomatic end to it, then it's over—not just for this war, but for Ukraine as a nation. Losing Mykolaiv and Odessa would destroy it. I mean, I don't understand how this isn't obvious. Why—why is it not worth counting your losses now, instead of just digging this hole deeper and deeper? That's one of my main frustrations right now.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, Ukraine is already suffering from not being able to use the Dnieper River as it did four years ago, when the Dnieper was open. A significant amount of goods produced in Ukraine were shipped

downriver to the Black Sea ports, then loaded up and sent out. That river's been closed now for two years, since a dam was blown up, I believe, in 2023. So there's been no effective navigation. Plus, now that Russia basically controls the lower half—or maybe the lower third—of the Dnieper River, even if the river were open, all Ukrainian cargo could easily be intercepted and destroyed. So, you know, that's one of the long-term issues: if Ukraine wants to remain viable as a nation and become a neutral country that's actually aligned with Russia, it can survive. But right now, I don't see any willingness on the part of the Europeans to go along with that.

## **#Glenn**

Yeah, I remember the Kakhovka Dam—that was also blamed on Russia. Yeah, again, it's a recurring theme. But it's what every journalist does, you know? It doesn't matter if there's no evidence, doesn't matter if all the evidence suggests the opposite. No journalist in the West wants to be seen as taking Russia's side. So even if it's common sense, even if it's obvious, everyone has to repeat the same nonsense—otherwise you're a stooge of the Kremlin zone.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Well, you've seen that RT video—the music video called \*Blame Putin\*. It's like a Christmas... Oh, you've got to go see it. It shows this family sitting on a couch, and it's this song that's kind of like a Christmas carol, but the refrain in every line is "Blame Putin." So anything bad that happens, it blames Putin—it's Putin's fault. And at the end, they've got AI images of von der Leyen, Boris Johnson, and Piers Morgan all saying "Blame Putin." So it makes your point. I think you'll find it hilarious, but it's also revealing an important truth.

## **#Glenn**

Well, thank you for your time. Have a happy New Year.

## **#Larry Johnson**

Hey, happy New Year to you, and we'll see you next year.