

# Scott Ritter: US-Iran War Imminent as Military Buildup Peaks

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter discusses the possibility of an imminent attack on Iran. 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: <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. We're joined today by Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector, a U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer, and a prolific author. Thank you for coming on. We're seeing a lot of indicators that another attack on Iran could be imminent. Some U.S. naval forces are arriving in the region, and Trump claims this is a greater armada than what was sent to Venezuela. There's also a lot of U.S. air power coming in, and we're seeing some disruption to the airspace — some civilian flights are being redirected. There are also media reports about plans for precision strikes against Iranian officials. How are you assessing this information? Are we heading toward war?

## #Scott Ritter

It certainly looks that way. Donald Trump has a history of pulling back from the brink on Iran because the consequences of conflict remain the same. There's the old saying: don't strike the king unless you plan on killing the king, because if you strike the king and the king's still alive, the king's going to kill you. Iran's the king of the region — let's just be straight about that. Iran has the ability to terminate all energy production capabilities in the region at will. In addition, Iran has the ability to inflict horrific harm on American military bases, including the potential of killing hundreds, if not thousands, of American service members.

I think we have to keep in the back of our minds the possibility of the United States losing some ships, up to and including an aircraft carrier. And Iran, of course, has the ability to deliver near-lethal damage to Israel. Israel has told the United States—apparently, according to news reports—that it's prepared to absorb up to 700 Iranian ballistic missiles if the United States can guarantee that whatever military action is taken removes the Iranian regime from power. Yeah, I've got bad news for U.S. military planners. Let's just be straight up and honest about this.

You don't have what it takes to remove Iran's military and civilian leadership from power, especially now that you've literally—literally—broadcast your punch. This isn't going to be a repeat of June, when you lulled the Iranians into a false sense of complacency by leading them to believe there would be ongoing negotiations about their nuclear program. They went to bed at night only to be attacked by Israel, with the backing of the United States, in a decapitation attempt that failed. The Iranians have been preparing for more than 20 years now to wage an existential conflict against Israel, the United States, and the West.

They've divided their nation into self-sustaining military and governing districts under the assumption that there could be a decapitation strike against Tehran. Not that it would eliminate the leadership, but it could cut off the leadership's ability to communicate with the various regions of Iran. So the Iranians have built underground cities and command posts capable of independently overseeing their designated areas. They're also able to continue resisting enemies—both those threatening Iran from within and those attacking from outside. The Iranian government even has a buried city in Mashhad.

I would imagine that, you know, they have their own continuity of government plan in place, and that the appropriate leaders have been sent to the appropriate locations. As we learned with the case of Fordow, the underground nuclear enrichment plant—Fordow was basically a modified, pre-existing underground cavern that the Iranians created for resilience. They have dozens, if not more, of these around the country, many of which we don't even know about, where they can hide production equipment, sensitive military equipment, documents, government office spaces, and enrichment capabilities.

The Iranians would be fools not to have implemented whatever plans they need for national existential resilience. And so we blew it. I mean, if you're going to carry out a decapitation strike, it has to be done by surprise—you don't telegraph your punch. And, you know, even if the United States were to come in with nuclear weapons—and I don't see them doing that—they're not going to eliminate the Iranian regime. It just isn't going to happen.

And what's going to happen is that the Iranians are going to deliver a knockout punch against Israel that very well may end Israel's ability to survive as a modern state—by taking out critical infrastructure that won't be repaired anytime soon, making Israel basically uninhabitable for millions of people who would have to flee. And demographically, that's the end of Israel. The Iranians are prepared not only to shut down the Strait of Hormuz but to permanently disrupt the ability of regional energy-producing nations to produce energy. This will have, you know, a near-fatal impact on the global economy. I mean, I fear for myself, for my family, and for the United States—the consequences.

You know, the dollar has already lost 10% of its value in the past year. We're looking at the potential for a complete collapse of the dollar. And, you know, energy prices are out of control, and this will resonate globally. I fear for you, because I know—I mean, I know Norway produces its own

energy, but, you know, you'll be impacted by this as well. This is the consequence of it. Hopefully, there are people smart enough to say, "Hey, Mr. President, this isn't going to work. It's not going to work at this time. Let's not do this. This is foolhardy. You'll lose the midterms. You'll be impeached—all of it." So, we'll see what Trump does. But right now, it looks as if the pieces are being put in place to carry out a major military attack against Iran.

## #Glenn

Well, what would the objective be here, though? Because there's no longer any talk about the nuclear program. Trump claims that this was already destroyed—doubtful. But anyway, the talk now is about precision strikes against the government, about holding the government accountable for the killing of protesters. Essentially, they're talking about regime change. And given that there's no unifying opposition, it begs the question of whether the main objective, therefore, is to destroy Iran—to break it into many smaller, manageable pieces.

Indeed, there was this Wall Street Journal article recently that had the title "A Fractured Iran Might Not Be So Bad." And it recognized that, yeah, there's a distinct possibility of a civil war following a regime change operation, which seems like it could... well, either you'd need an extremely authoritarian opposition to take over—capable of controlling it, something like the jihadists who were put in place in Syria—or it would mean the fragmentation of Iran. Do you see this being the main game plan, just to destroy the country?

## #Scott Ritter

Absolutely. I see the plan as being to destroy Iran's ability to carry out effective national-level command and control, to suppress regional security infrastructure, institutions, units, organizations, and so on—and then to facilitate uprisings. In Balochistan, we know the CIA actively backs a Baloch Liberation Army. In Khuzestan, we back Arab liberation movements. We back the Kurds. We back the Azeris. So you'd be seeing uprisings in all of these areas—CIA-backed operations—and then you'd have the MEK and the monarchists working to destabilize Iran from within, in what I guess you'd call the core of Iran. I think Trump believes he can put the Shah's son in power and resurrect the monarchy.

You know, Trump is not the smartest man in the world—he literally isn't. I think people need to understand that, especially in the world we live in. He's extraordinarily susceptible to nonsense being whispered in his ear. And right now, he's being presented with what appears to be a solid front of anti-regime Iranians—expatriates in Los Angeles, a very strong group there, but also throughout the United States—people who are saying it's time for the regime to fall, that the monarchy is ready to return. And remember, the CIA has been backing the monarchy, and Israel has been backing the monarchy for, again, close to 30 years. So I think Trump has bought into the nonsense, and he believes this plan can succeed.

## #Glenn

But if there is a regime change operation, as you suggested, you need some groups on the ground. I had the impression that the efforts to instigate all these riots and anti-government violence—which died off recently—were essentially the opportunity to go after the Iranian government. And once that failed, the U.S. or Israel would come in bombing during the chaos as a way of supporting an uprising. But given that this, well, fell apart—it didn't just die down—it appears that Iran was able to roll up a lot of these covert networks that had been built up over years, if not decades. So has the U.S. and Israel lost a lot of their, I guess, ground assets in Iran, which could have been used during a war, or at least as a necessity for a regime change operation?

## #Scott Ritter

Again, not being read into the covert plan, I can only speculate here. What I think happened is that an internal cellular network of agents working for hostile foreign intelligence—primarily Israel, the United States, and Great Britain—was sacrificed to create the conditions for unrest. If I know the Israelis the way I think I know the Israelis, and the CIA the way I think I know the CIA, you know, they operate—when they do something like this, it's called “shaking the tree.” I've done it before. You go in and you tickle the system, then you see how the system responds. And they tickled the system. They sacrificed an entire network—we're talking hundreds of assets—to achieve this.

But what they didn't do was mobilize the actual paramilitary organizations that would lead the insurrection. I think the goal was to create unrest, and then there was supposed to be a bombing campaign to hit those security nodes that were activated to suppress it. So now, to be honest, the United States knows exactly how Iran responds. They got it all—they collected everything. They're not stupid. They sacrificed these people, but the Iranians had to communicate, had to activate, had to mobilize. They identified units, personalities, structures that responded. This was their first team, and that team's been identified. And this is the team that's going to be bombed when the strike begins—they're going to suppress this.

And this is when the paramilitary forces come in—the people who are training in northern Iraq, the Kurdish forces there, the Kurdish forces that operate along the border of Iran. This is where the Azeri forces, operating inside Azerbaijan under CIA and Israeli control, and the Baluch Liberation Army come in. All of these paramilitary forces—actual terrorist armies—are going to mobilize and make their move. At the same time, the Mujahideen al-Khalq, which is one of the most resilient, survivable organizations, will mobilize from within. These people have networks that weren't sacrificed, that are still in play. These are the networks the Israelis used to assassinate scientists, etc. They're going to be killing everybody they can get a hold of.

They're going to be running around putting plastic explosives on cars, you know, in rooms. This is going to be full-scale—go after everybody and kill everybody. Not necessarily the senior leadership, which should have been evacuated, but all of these security nodes that were identified when they

shook the tree. They're going to die, or at least they're going to try to die. The idea is to create massive confusion—airstrikes, on-the-ground activity, paramilitary forces moving in, a resumption of the uprising—because now there won't be security forces to hold it down. And this will cause Iran to fracture and break apart. Whether Iran is actually split up, you know, you'd have to have the Pakistani government willing to absorb parts.

And I don't see the Pakistani government doing that. But I think you're going to see Iran fractured into autonomous regions of chaos and anarchy that will be uncontrolled by the center. And from the Israeli perspective, this is a success. The Israelis don't care about the Iranian people. The Americans don't care about the Iranian people. All we care about is getting rid of the Ayatollah regime, and that's what we're going to be trying to do. Again, I say this—understand that what I just laid out, which I believe is actually what's going to happen—the Iranians know this. They've been preparing for it. So it's not as though the Iranians are going, "Oh, you mean the MEK is going to come out of the woodwork?"

Oh, you mean the Baluch Liberation Army? The Iranians are ready for this. Now, how ready are you? It's like saying, "I'm ready for Mike Tyson to punch me in the face." Can you really be prepared for Mike Tyson to punch you in the face? If he knocks you out, you're knocked out. But at least you know the punch is coming, and you can prepare for it. We'll see what happens. I think this is a horrible government. There's no reason for the United States and Israel to be pushing for the elimination of the Iranian government at this time, except that Benjamin Netanyahu desperately needs this for his political survival. So once again, the United States is willing to sacrifice everything—our national security, our national legitimacy—everything on behalf of Israel.

## #Glenn

Well, if you were advising the Iranian government, or if you were just in Tehran, how would you assess their likely response? Because in the first attack on Iran, I would have thought the main objective for Iran would have been to show its strength, its resilience, its ability to strike back—to build up its deterrent, to make sure the aggressive forces were pushed back and deterred from doing this again. But what you're describing, though, is an existential threat. The goal isn't some limited strike; it's to destroy Iran. And if they fail, they might go back, regroup, and try again.

So, given that this is how Iran likely sees the threat against it, it would have an incentive to react differently this time, I would think. That is, not to hold back in terms of striking various Western military assets or Israel in the region. Or even, you know, some have suggested Iran might carry out a preemptive strike if all the American warships, fighter planes, and bombers are in position. And, you know, if it looks like they're going for it, then it might be better for Iran to hit them first. Again, this is speculation—it's not something seen in the media. No one in Tehran is whispering in my ear either. So I'm just wondering, how do you assess the likely way the Iranians would behave differently this time, as opposed to the first time they were attacked?

## #Scott Ritter

Well, the first time they were attacked, they weren't expecting it. It took them by surprise. So right off the bat, if Iran is taken by surprise again, then shame on them—that's on them. I mean, if I were the decision-maker in Iran, the Abraham Lincoln would already be sunk, American bases would already be destroyed, Israel would be eliminated. I'd be carrying out massive operations against the Kurds in Iraq, the Baloch. I'd be wiping out Avaaz, killing anybody suspected of MEK ties. I'd be sending assassination teams around the world to kill the Shah's son. I would kill everybody. But that's just me. I'm not Iranian—I'm just a bloodthirsty son of a bitch who doesn't believe in standing by and getting hit in the face first.

The Iranians, unfortunately for them, are very civilized. They're very proper, and I believe their government still holds out hope that war can be avoided. So they're not going to take, I think, the actions that would be necessary to preempt this. Iran has every right to, though. I mean, the statements made by the United States and Israel already justify it. There's no doubt that an imminent threat is building up. Iran should go to the United Nations, declare an emergency, and demand international intervention—declare that there's an imminent threat, and if that threat can't be eliminated within a certain period of time, Iran has no choice but to carry out preemptive self-defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

They'd have every legitimate right to do this. But I also think they're being advised by the Russians and the Chinese to be patient, too—that, again, we know of at least two occasions when Donald Trump pulled back from the brink. So maybe there are people advising the Iranians that this could be the third time, that there's no reason or justification to go forward. Because, you know, a preemptive strike—if you're going to strike the king, kill the king. So the preemptive strike has to be a knockout blow to the United States and to Israel. And one of the things that happens if you carry out a very effective preemptive strike is that you open yourself up to nuclear retaliation. And that would be, again, the end of Iran.

Which is why, hopefully, if I were advising the Iranians, you'd have some rational people say, "That's okay, Scott. Go sit in the back corner and eat your raw meat. We'll get back to you later." But no, I think Iran—I have hope and confidence that the Iranians understand what's happening and that they're preparing to ride out what's going to be one hell of a storm. I also need to say this: I'm an American. I don't wish harm on any Americans. I don't want any American hurt in this. And, yeah, I just—this is going to be a bad, bad thing, a very bad thing, because it's a war of choice. I just hope and pray that the leaders of the American men and women who are in harm's way do their jobs right and bring as many of their boys and girls home as possible.

## #Glenn

Meanwhile, Trump made some comments that, as this massive armada is heading toward Iran, he said the Iranians now want to make a deal. Again, his words—we shouldn't necessarily take that

literally. I don't think the Iranians actually said, "We're ready to make a deal." It's just words. But it does beg the question: what kind of deal would we even be talking about? Because this is no longer about the nuclear deal. So is this just about trying to give them a sense of security, that this is only to put pressure on them to negotiate? Or is he actually looking for a deal?

Because surely Trump must see the disaster that awaits if he goes forward with this. And it kind of fits his approach not to get dragged into something too big. He always seems to want to—whether it's Yemen or Venezuela—go in quickly, get out quickly, and have something to show for it, as opposed to taking massive casualties on the American side. So do you think he's actually looking for a deal? And if so, what exactly would that deal be? Because it would have to be something else. Are the Iranians going to disarm? Are they going to accept voluntary regime change? I mean, what would such a deal actually entail?

## #Scott Ritter

Well, I think a deal would—first of all, you know, Karin Kneissl, she's a former Austrian foreign minister who's currently residing in St. Petersburg. She heads up what's called the Gorky Center. A very, very smart lady. She abhors the term "deal." She calls it the language of gangsters—which is why Donald Trump uses it. A deal... I mean, Donald Trump wants a deal because a deal is a one-way street. Donald Trump wants everything for himself, nothing for you, and he can break it anytime he wants because he'll just call it a bad deal and say he's looking for a better one. It's the language of gangsters. And the Iranians should understand that and not be looking for any deal.

You don't deal with the mafia. They always win, because that means you've gone down to their level and you're playing their game. Iran needs to be looking for a comprehensive, treaty-based agreement founded in international law—which is problematic, because Donald Trump has stated that he doesn't believe in international law. So right off the bat, I'd say we just have incompatible visions of what conflict resolution looks like in Iran and in the United States. But to answer your question—a deal would be nuclear, you know, to bring to a close the nuclear file and the ballistic missile issue. Iran would have to voluntarily disarm of the one thing that gives it viability.

Um, and once they did that, then Israel would come in and finish them off. I mean, that's the deal. What the United States is saying is: voluntarily get rid of anything that gives you, you know, deterrence capability, and then Israel will finish you off because we want regime change. Israel will not be happy until the Ayatollahs are gone. And frankly speaking, the core of American policymakers share that same sentiment. You know, they shouldn't have gone over the embassy walls in 1979, because when they did that, they taught an entire nation to hate them. And that hatred is still there. It's irrational hatred. It doesn't make any sense, but it doesn't matter. You don't take Americans hostage for 444 days.

You don't poke the dead bodies—the charred bodies of eight American service members who were sent to Iran not to invade it, but to rescue hostages the Iranians had taken. I mean, the Iranians

aren't the good guys here in terms of what happened in 1979. I know about the Shah, SAVAK, culpability, and all that, but the American people don't care about that. The Iranian people need to understand that when you insult the American people, that insult says we don't forgive and forget—we hold grudges. And right now, there's a big grudge against Iran. There aren't too many Americans out there; I'm one of the few who speak up for good, normalized relations with Iran.

Most Americans would be very happy to see the Ayatollahs go away—not because they know anything about the Ayatollahs or how Iran functions, but because they've been programmed to link the Ayatollahs with Iran: holding Americans hostage, taking the American embassy, a failed rescue mission, eight dead Americans burned on the desert floor at Desert One. You know, this is the reality. So there should be no compromise on the part of the Iranians, because the moment they compromise, the moment they make a deal, it's over. You don't make a deal with the devil, you don't make a deal with the mafia, and you don't make a deal with Donald Trump.

## #Glenn

Given that this is an existential threat to the Iranians, whether they make a deal or not, as you say, regime change is still the key objective. How would this affect how the Russians and the Chinese respond to an American or Israeli attack on Iran? Well, I heard there was a good possibility that the Russians had something to do with shutting down Starlink during the riots. But overall, Iran is a key regional power, and the wider Eurasian continent is a central pillar of this greater Eurasian partnership. For countries like China, it's also an important source of energy. And if Iran were knocked out, that would certainly be used as an opportunity to go after Russia or China in the future. So it's hard to imagine they'd allow Iran to go down the same way Venezuela did, for example.

## #Scott Ritter

I think you hit the nail on the head here. Iran's not Venezuela. Iran is much closer and much more important. It's a BRICS member. Russia has a strategic relationship with Iran. There's a secret military annex that's now been ratified by both the Russians and the Iranians and is in play. And the Chinese have likewise been, you know, working with the Iranians. I wrote an article a couple of weeks ago that many say is the reason I got debanked. Basically, I said, "Give the camel a bloody nose." You can't let the camel stick its nose under the tent, or else the camel's coming in. And the United States is the camel—it's trying to stick its nose under the tent here, and somebody needs to give it a bloody nose.

Now, again, I'm not advocating for any harm to come to any Americans—I don't want that at all. I was more or less talking about, you know, economic actions that could be taken to hold the United States back or punish it for bad policy. But if I were the Russians—again, the United States isn't as smart or as clever as it thinks it is. The B-2 strike that was conducted gave away every American capability you could imagine. When they talk about precision strikes, they're talking about

penetrating Iranian airspace with B-2 bombers and missiles, F-35s, F-22s. That profile has been flown, captured, recorded—every aspect of it has been assessed by the Iranians, the Russians, and the Chinese.

If I were the Russians, I'd say my goal is to shoot down one or more B-2 bombers and prove once and for all that the concept of American supremacy—that America can't be touched, that it can do anything it wants—is fundamentally flawed. Now, if they do shoot them down, I hope the American aircrews get out and are rescued by American search and rescue, and that there are no prisoners of war or anything like that. But yeah, the point is, again, if I were advising Donald Trump, I'd say don't do this—you could be walking into a trap. The Russians aren't going to sit back idly and let you bomb Iran. Russia's not going to respond directly; they're not going to go to war for Iran. But Russia will do everything it can to make sure your military adventure is a failure—a fundamental failure.

You know, this is up to and including—the Iranians have the ability to hit American shipping in a way that no other nation that's recently fought the Americans could, including the Houthis. We're talking about Russian-like missiles that can't be intercepted, that would rain death and destruction down on the platform, penetrating the deck, potentially hitting the nuclear reactor, possibly sinking the ship with catastrophic loss of life, and taking down other ships that are part of the carrier battle group. The United States has become very cocky, and we've gotten used to inflicting harm on others without having harm inflicted on us. I believe the Russians and the Chinese are going to do everything possible to help the Iranians give the United States a bloody nose—a broken nose—in this fight.

And that's, again, another reason why you have to ask yourself: why are we doing this? Why go through the motions? Because of Trump's ego. I mean, it really comes down to that. It's also about the control that Israel has over American foreign policy and national security policy. But, you know, I'm not saying the Iranians are perfect, and I'm not saying they can't mess it up, and I'm not saying they're going to succeed. But if I were the Russians, I'd be doing everything I could to ensure the Iranians shoot down at least one, maybe two, B-2 bombers in the strike package that's coming in. That would be a humiliation for Donald Trump that he wouldn't be able to survive.

## #Glenn

Well, as we speak, I see on one of the screens that there's an American surveillance aircraft over the Strait of Hormuz, and there are also Iranian drones doing reconnaissance on the American naval assets in the region. So it does look as if both sides are preparing for war now. But just as a last question, dude, if we're not going to war, what would be an off-ramp at this point? Because it's very hard to step back from this massive show of force unless there's something to show for it—something that proves your pressure tactics were successful and you can come home with a result. Otherwise, it looks as if war seems very certain by now.

## #Scott Ritter

Donald Trump is someone who has no problem telling lies. And if he wants to, he can craft something like, "I received a phone call, assurances that Iran will behave properly. Once again, American military strength has compelled the Ayatollahs to back down," and so on. That's the off-ramp. Because this war has no legitimate foundation—normally an off-ramp takes us away from the issues of concern. Here they say the issues of concern are the nuclear program and ballistic missiles, but Iran's not going to give those up. Not in a vacuum, not anytime soon. So I think Donald Trump, if he wanted to end this, could do what he did last time.

You know, I made a decision to save Iranian lives. When I was briefed on the total damage that would be done by this strike, I realized the Iranian people have suffered enough under this regime, and I'm not going to facilitate continued suffering. Thousands of Iranians would be killed if we struck. Instead, we're going to pull back, double down on sanctions, and work to further isolate the regime. And we'll always have our military in the background, ready to pounce—something like that. Because Donald Trump has no problem telling lies and manufacturing his own reality, he can say anything he wants. And unfortunately, we have an American population that's just dumb enough to believe it.

## **#Glenn**

That could be a strength now, though, couldn't it? Because usually countries lock themselves in; they get stuck in a rhetorical trap. I guess Trump's skills—in terms of lying, getting away with it, just spewing pure BS, or this ability to shift focus—are part of that. I mean, one day you're talking about Venezuela, the next day you're talking about Greenland. It is a talent, I guess, this managing of the media. It could be an off-ramp if one wants to be optimistic. Final thoughts?

## **#Scott Ritter**

You've got to take the silver lining when it's offered. There's a dark cloud over us, but look, it's sort of reflective of the state of affairs we're dealing with today—where having a lying leader with no moral compass is somehow a good thing, because his lies, his lack of moral compass, could actually prevent a war.

## **#Glenn**

So, I'll take it. Well, on that optimistic note, thank you very much for taking the time and sharing your insights. Thanks for having me.