

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson: Did Trump Approve an Israeli Nuclear Strike on Iran?

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#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We are joined today by Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, the former chief of staff to the U.S. Secretary of State. Thank you for coming back on the program.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Good to be with you. Good to see you are in one place, stationary.

#Glenn

Yeah, I'm traveling a bit around China these days. So, yeah, so finally I've been able to sit down. We do have the Middle East, though. I mean, if it wasn't chaotic already, it seems to really be spinning out of control now. Not only is the U.S.-Iran war escalating, but it appears to be spreading quite fast as well. I mean, there's a lot to really grab onto here, or unpack, but I thought maybe a good place to start would be this Mecca Pact between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. From what I hear, Pakistan and Turkey will send troops to Saudi Arabia, and there's even discussions about Syria, but this hasn't really been confirmed yet, and I think it still belongs to speculation because I've seen some contradictory reports. Again, I assume you have a better overview, so what is it that's actually happening here?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

First, as John Mearsheimer and Doug McGregor and I and others have said, and you probably have said yourself, at least in questioning, if not in statement, it's inevitable this is going to regionalize, just as it's inevitable that eventually, sad to say, Ukraine is going to regionalize. That said, the Mecca Pact is a farce. The Houthis are not about to threaten Mecca. They're not terrorists like, what, 1978,

when Pakistan had to send lots of forces down there to, you know, clean the terrorists out of the temple, as it were. Their respect for Mecca is probably the equivalent of any other group in the world, Islamic, and probably even more profound than most. So they're not going to.

And they know that. Pakistan knows that. Turkey knows that. So this is symbolic of this. This is not a pact. This is an entente. And it's an entente that was set up primarily with the enemy in mind being Israel, by all three of these states, one of them a nuclear power, as you well know. So I don't know what it means in terms of force contribution, but I'm pretty confident it's not going to mean anything game-changing. And at most, it will be like France or like Britain, who between them couldn't field a brigade of troops. It'll be nominal. Look at the problems France has got right now. Would you like to be Macron? What a mess he's got. He's got another year or so of it to go. If he's not thrown out on his head, people are comparing France right now to the France of 1792. So I don't think there's going to be any outside help for Donald Trump.

#Glenn

Not real substantive help.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

What does that mean? That means the Houthis are going to win. And then the question becomes, win what? And how extensive? And how threatening to other interests like the Bab al-Mandab? That's anybody's guess. But I will tell you that, having trained some of these people and having trained their counterparts in the south, I know who's going to win ultimately inside Yemen. And maybe when I say inside Yemen, I mean maybe restore some of the old parts of Yemen that were taken by Saudi Arabia. And I don't count Saudi Arabia's chances of this as being much at all, even with full U.S. help, and that's not forthcoming, at least not right now. And I'm quite confident one of the reasons it's not forthcoming is not just political with Donald Trump, or whatever you want to call it. It's really the fact we don't have the capacity. So, all to say that I think we're going to have a new triumph in the region, and it's going to be al-Ansar.

#Glenn

Well, as Ansar Allah, or the Houthis, as we call them in the West, they've now struck even the airport in the Saudi capital. And, well, the Turks said that they could send troops, but they would be there for defense, which means they're not going to partake in anything in Yemen. While Pakistan, again, it's all these unconfirmed reports. They said that they might strike the Houthis, but that seems problematic at best because that would create some real tensions between Pakistan and Iran. I mean, I just don't see the Pakistanis going down that road.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

And there are a lot of Pakistanis that will tell you that they feel for the Palestinians, genuinely feel for the Palestinians. So ISI, the Pakistani military—the civilians don't even count anymore, really—they're not going to go against their people in that kind of flamboyant way, or that kind of aggressive way, I don't think. And I think this pact, this entente, I'll call it, was formed not to oppose Iran. It was formed to oppose Israel. That's whom all consider a common enemy for various and different reasons, but nonetheless a common enemy, even Turkey. So, and if Netanyahu does what I think there's at least a 20, 30% chance he's going to do, tries to start yet another brouhaha by sending an armored column to Damascus, which he could do in a heartbeat, and take Damascus without even hardly firing a shot, probably he'd scatter the forces before him, and he'd have some guerrilla warfare afterwards.

But I think he could take Damascus if he wanted to. And that's just the kind of thing he would do. So I just, I don't think the regionalization is really to be posited with what the Houthis are doing, other than to say the globalization that they're causing, added to by the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandeb, has got to be taken into note here sooner or later. But the Houthis have been very smart about their control of the Red Sea and, in essence, traffic through the Red Sea, very specific about if it's helping Israel and if it's oppressing the Palestinians, in our interpretation, we will stop it. If it's not, hail, farewell. Go on your way.

That's a very, I would say, that's even an internationally accepted position, because there are a lot of people, as we're seeing right now with these aftermaths of the UNGA, a lot of people in the world, both governments and their people, who sympathize, empathize, and even favor the situation that's happening with regard to the Palestinians, as opposed to what Israel's doing to them. Which, by the way, Haaretz's Jack Khoury in Haaretz said: "No government, no reconstruction, no foreseeable hope." Bingo. There's nothing happening for them. So increasingly, I think you're going to see the world lining up for the Palestinians and not for the Israelis. And for various reasons, with the Israelis deadly set against Bibi Netanyahu and the Israelis, to include their continuation in the Middle East as an entity.

#Glenn

Well, on the topic of Israel, the U.S. is reportedly planning to resume strikes on Iran. Trump keeps saying that it will happen after the midterm, or suggesting it. But again, if he builds up forces in the region, sets a date for striking Iran, it seems unlikely that Iranians will just sit by and wait. Indeed, they might strike. Well, they actually already hit Kuwait, and as U.S. troops are in Israel, I'm wondering, you know, Israel could get pulled into this in two ways. One, they join the war—well, rejoin—or the Iranians will strike the U.S. troops in Israel, and they will be pulled in. How do you see their likelihood or their willingness or their sustainability, if that is by the Israelis, to fight such a war?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Let me answer that by saying that I think there's at least a 50-50 chance that what I've heard is true. Whether it's part of a propaganda campaign, what I suspect, or it's part of actual war planning, I can't tell, but I suspect it's propaganda. And that is that it's been leaked, and leaked purposefully to the Iranians, that Trump has given Bibi permission to use a nuclear weapon against them. What that does, I think, is create—and one of the points of evidence I would say illustrates this—is we know with some confidence, I'd say 90% confidence, that Iran has issued a set of orders that have gone out to what we would call the militia, roughly 2 million, the Iranian National Army, another rough 2 million, and the IRGC. And these orders are what we call CBR orders.

That is chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, in other words. They are orders that say, prepare for this kind of attack. So that kind of corroborates this information that they have gotten, this propaganda maybe, that the permission has been given. On top of that, I don't think they need even that to go into that kind of stance with their military, because that's what they would expect, worst case, from Bibi Netanyahu, given his embroilment in this campaign, this election that could go anywhere, the turmoil it's causing in Israel and such. So on that basis, they've got to be ready, I think, to preempt if they're going to stop something like that from happening, if they believe it's really a possibility. How do they do that?

Well, the Israelis have not been stupid, I don't think, with regard to Dimona. They have probably done the same thing that Iran did before we struck in those vicious days of B-2 bombing by those superb Air Force pilots, blah, blah, blah, wherein we did very little damage to Iran's nuclear program, principally because, one, it was so deep the bombs didn't get to it, or two, and this was the most prolific reason, if you will, they moved it. They had forewarning and they moved it. There's some question as to whether or not we didn't give them forewarning, actually. Think about that one for a minute. So I think the Iranians have a number of things to look at here, and I think they're looking at all of them rather methodically.

And it all boils down to if Israel is going to do something like the, what do they call it, the Samson Option or whatever, if they're going to do something like that, they're ready. In any event, they're ready, whether it's totally conventional and so forth. And are they going to preempt? I think it's going to be close. But yes, I think they are, if they get wind, and it's good wind, that Israel is going to attack them. But then I got to ask the question, Glenn, with what? That armored column is not going to roll through Damascus down to Iran. If it were, it'd be swallowed up and killed. What are they going to attack them with? They don't have diesel. They don't have JP4 and JP5 and JP8 aviation fuel. They don't have those 2,000-pound bombs yet. They don't have real air defenses yet. What are they going to attack with? That's my huge question.

Are they going to send the IDF as they did into Lebanon? I don't think so. So what are they going to do? Are they going to send 100 plane strikes? Oh, guess what's going to happen to your airports if you send 100 plane strikes? They won't have any airport to come back to. In fact, they won't have any facilities, period, to come back to. And you may get a lot of those airplanes shot down because

there's some pretty sophisticated Chinese air defense weapons in Iran now, and Chinese to run them. In other words, as a military professional, Glenn, I have no idea what's going to happen, but I know threats are going one way and coming back the other way.

You can look at things like preparation for CBR. You can look at things like Iran has never trusted us, does not trust us now. This Kabuki theater with the foreign minister about the Majlis impeaching him and everything. They're all sending signals back and forth, but the signals don't change the reality: the United States is losing this war. Iran is not losing. I won't say it's winning, but it's not losing. And not losing is a win, as Haaretz pointed out on March 1, one day after Trump started this atrocious war. And we're looking at the midterms. And guess what? In my country, from what I can tell, talking to Republicans, whom I still talk to, all three of them, Trump is in deep trouble. Now, he said he doesn't care. He's elected.

He said he doesn't care. "I don't care. I'm elected. I got two more years." The Republicans are going to lose their ass. They are going to lose their ass, regardless of what Abbott says from Texas. I was just listening to him. "Well, if California gerrymanders, we'll gerrymander too, because New York gerrymanders, Massachusetts." This is nonsense. We're destroying our election system while we try to fight the two parties out. This has nothing to do with America, nothing to do with America's interests, and everything to do with, as Washington said would happen, the Republican Party and the Democratic Party's interests. They don't care about America. So, all to say, the United States is in domestic peril, and overseas it's in foreign peril, period.

#Glenn

Well, as this desperation, though, starts to set in, and you said this report that Trump has green-lighted for the Israelis to use nuclear weapons against Iran, you know, there's been some—yeah, well, some rhetoric which caused me some concern. First of all, you had Trump making this reference as to, you know, if Iran has nuclear weapons, you know, they could take out, you know, Los Angeles, and, you know, he starts making these kind of comments.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

And then you had Netanyahu making mention that he welcomed them taking out San Diego and Los Angeles.

#Glenn

But Netanyahu said if they have nuclear weapons, all of Israel's 10 million will be up in smoke, you know, destroyed. So my point is, when both the U.S. and Israel begin to frame this as an existential threat, it's concerning because that sounds like they're building a case for something. It is. But I was just wondering, where does the information come from, though, about the possibility of using these nuclear weapons?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Well, the information about the U.S. using nuclear weapons comes from none other than Elbridge Colby in the United States, a very influential figure under Hegseth in the Pentagon. And overseas, if you want some real proof of it, it comes from Jonathan Pollard, that treasonous spy who we released and sent back to Israel to live out his life in comfort. Both of them have suggested that nuclear weapons ought to be used. And Pollard even went further and said they ought to be used first, not second or third. They ought to be used first. And Trump has given more than enough hints with his remarks at the UN General Assembly, for example. How do you destroy a civilization like Iran without contemplating the use of nuclear weapons? I mean, I don't see how you do it. And yet he has made forceful statements about destroying Iran on more than one occasion.

Egregiously so at the UN. But how do you do it without using nuclear weapons? And after all, next to Russia, and very, very close to that, we have the most on the face of the earth. And I would argue, still, as a military professional, having had something to do with some of them, we have the best. We have ones that will work every time, virtually, and we have the ones that will hit with a circular error of probability so close that your eyebrows will be scorched as the rocket passes by. So we've got the capacity. And there are people asking why, if we have the capacity and have spent billions of dollars on it, we don't use it. And Donald Trump's just the sort of person to say, "Okay, I'm going to do it." I wish I couldn't say that. I wish I was absolutely afraid to say something like that. But not with this guy. This guy has corroborated, proven, substantiated to me that he is utterly insane.

#Glenn

Well, the problem there, though, is not just the human cost of using nuclear weapons against Iran, a nation of more than 90 million people. There's another problem, though. That is, the United States isn't the only nuclear power in the world, either. There is Russia and China. How do you see them? How would they react if it were to come to this, that the Israelis would then use nuclear weapons with American approval?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

That's a fundamental question that I hope got asked by someone at Camp David. But after watching that cabinet meeting and the sycophancy of people like Scott Bessent and Peter Hegseth, I can't guarantee you that that question was proffered at Camp David. That's where it should have been offered. But I don't think I can assure you that it was, because this is not a group that does anything in private that it doesn't do in public, which is largely sycophancy.

#Glenn

What do you think the Iranians—what are their options now, then? Because if they see the Americans losing, the Americans are getting a bit more desperate. Again, once you feel like, well,

Israel and the United States feel like they're losing, a humiliating loss like this, which they can't afford, you must know that they will go to great lengths to avoid this. But what do you think? What cards do the Iranians have to play here?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Stick to their—I think, I go back to that Haaretz headline that said, all they've got to do to win is not lose. And all Israel and the U.S. have to do is achieve a spectacular victory. Now, what you're saying is that, that spectacular victory being absent, they will go the full Monty to achieve it. That, I think, is a possibility, as I've said. But I don't think it's a probability. So I don't think the Iranians are going to plan based on that. But clearly they are planning with this CBR alert on the possibility of Bibi Netanyahu himself possibly going all the way with the weaponry he has at his beck and call. And the most likely use there would be those submarines.

I mean, they have air-delivered, they have rocket-delivered, they have submarine-delivered, and that will be the one that I would expect them to use because it's the least apt to be detected and thus the least apt to be preempted. But as we said before, as I said, I think they're sealing their doom if they do that, because you're not going to get all the missiles in Iran, and those missiles are going to come down on you. And if I'm being told the truth about the increased, enhanced quality of Iranian intelligence after having really rid themselves of, either in heavy imprisonment or dead, most of Israel's cohorts on their own territory.

And it ranged the gamut from Azerbaijanis to Afghans, you name it, that were essentially spying for them—Iran, and some Iranians too, and of course some Israelis. Risk-taking, you might say. If it's true that they have destroyed all those people, then Israel's eyes on Iran are not very good, and I would imagine that in league with that was an enhancement of Iran's eyes on Israel—human intelligence. So, will they know? Probably. Will they preempt? Probably. Will it be devastating? Yes. Will Israel cease to exist for all intents and purposes? Yeah. That's how devastating it's going to be for Israel. So that's, I hope, got to be somewhat of a deterrent too.

#Glenn

Well, again, before one reaches for a nuclear weapon, there seem to be more steps up the escalation ladder, unless one is going for some nuclear decapitation strike. But it seems likely that then the U.S. and Israel would first perhaps go after the energy infrastructure in Iran. But did you see this in the cards? And, well, if they do this, what is the significance of the United States having pulled out of Iraq? Do you see Iraq possibly playing a bigger role in this war without the U.S. presence there?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

That's two big questions. The first one I would answer with: I think China is more involved now. I think after the meeting with Trump, Xi gave some orders. And I think they're more involved now. And I think that's part of the thing that we have to take into consideration. Second, we don't have any forces. We really do not have any forces. I don't know if you saw Mearsheimer quoting Barry McCaffrey. Well, I know Barry McCaffrey fairly well. I used to sit across the seat from him in the chairman's mess in the Pentagon and talk about strategy and such. Barry's a pretty dependable guy when he's not advocating for the defense contractors. But Barry said 150,000 American troops just to take over, if you will. And he didn't say for how long—the Strait of Hormuz. I'm saying a million troops, a million troops, 10 years, several trillion dollars to defeat Iran.

We don't have anything close to that. So what are we going to do conventionally? What kind of force are we going to put together? Indeed, we're withdrawing carriers from the region right now. And people say, "Oh, 10,000 troops are over there." Well, 5,000 of them are on a carrier. Another couple of thousand are probably manning the aircraft. Well, how many troops are there? Well, there's a couple thousand Marines. Glenn, we do not have... We've been lying to the world ever since the first Gulf War. That was the peak of the American military. And no matter how many lies Pete Hegseth tells, we are not what we were. We are a shadow of our former self, to coin an old phrase. We cannot do anything conventionally. Ergo, look at the rest of our arsenal, which is what I'm trying to say.

I'm not sure Israel's in much different shape either, in terms of jet fuel, in terms of actually having the aircraft. Now, we've got the aircraft. How do we get the aircraft there, and where's the ramp and apron space and so forth for those aircraft other than what we've already got there? Because if Iran were to attack Ben Gurion Airport, it would be like the Japanese attacking the wingtip-to-wingtip airplanes in Pearl Harbor in 1941. This just doesn't make any sense conventionally. And Trump's threats don't take that into consideration. He just pulls them out of his rear end. And Hegseth apparently and Caine, they just bless them. But I don't understand how we're going to do what Trump is intimating, or even at times threatening, we're going to do, because we don't have the military power to do it. Period.

#Glenn

Yeah, that's what I'm thinking. Even if the U.S. will be able to seize some of the islands in the Strait of Hormuz or even the Iranian mainland, seizing it on day one is one thing, but how does one hold it?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Precisely. And how does one get his water and his food? Even Barry would say, yeah, okay, 150,000, and then you've got to worry about what happens afterwards. You take it, and then you've got to worry. And maybe all your Ospreys are shot down. Maybe if you use any paratroopers, all your paratroopers are dead. Drones attack them while they were hanging under their parachutes. This is

a new world we're in. And I'm not sure that—I'm certainly not sure that Hegseth and the Army and others have adapted to it as well as they should. And I'm not sure they've taken the lessons they should take from the war to this point, as well as the war in Ukraine, which has been dramatic proof of how much the battlefield has changed. And frankly, we're not ready for that changed battlefield.

But at the core of it all, Glenn, is the fact that the all-volunteer force, which is the way we have manned our military since Nixon eliminated the draft, is not working. And Hegseth can go all day long about his Christian proselytization and how that has gained new forces for the military. And he can go all day long about reenlistment rates and enlistment rates and everything. He's lying through his teeth. The only way we've upped the percentage of people coming into the Army, for example, is by letting 10, 11% of mental category fours come in. That's one out of ten soldiers is now a McNamara's 100,000-type troop. Can't read his own or her own name on the guard roster. These are dangers, not assets to the forces. Again, we're a paper tiger. But we're not a paper tiger when it comes to a nuclear arsenal. And we have a whole lot of these small, very dangerous nuclear weapons.

#Glenn

Yeah, this is kind of my concern about Trump, that is. He doesn't seem to mind criticism or, you know, even when he seizes the oil of Venezuela, he doesn't shy away from saying, "That's what we went for. We took the oil. Now we're wealthier." Well, he gets his support for showing strength, because the main concern is the relative decline of the U.S. You know, if he violates some laws or human rights, whatever it is, as long as he shows strength, I think that's what he would look for. So again, nuclear weapons would be a show of strength. But on the use of U.S. troops otherwise, even if it's not invading, land invasion, if it's just resuming the attacks on Iran, how do you assess the logistics, though? Because again, the logistics of war, as we've seen both in Ukraine and in Iran, logistics is key. And the Iranians seem to have been very systematic in going after this, that is, the naval bases. How do you see the—what state do you see now the U.S. logistics in?

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Well, we have an old adage in the military, and I don't think it has lost any of its viability or truth. And that is that operating on interior lines is much to be preferred to operating on exterior lines. And all that means is that, let's take Russia, for example. They're operating on interior lines, but so is Ukraine. Russia's interior lines are a little bit longer, so its logistics problem is a little bit more difficult. That's a special situation because they're contiguous. Let's look at that in terms of the Persian Gulf. We're operating on exterior lines that now, because of what Iran has done to our bases in the region, are 8,000 to 9,000 miles long and mostly maritime. You can say we've got an air bridge out of Ramstein, but guess what?

Desert Shield, Desert Storm—check out that air bridge. Ninety-five percent of what we sent to the region for Desert Shield, Desert Storm was carried on ships, 5% on airplanes. Point being, we have

massive, long exterior lines. Iran is on its own territory. Its lines are very short, particularly to the Persian Gulf. If you look at the region as a whole and all we've lost there, which gave us a little bit of interior line capability, it's mostly gone. And to come to your question about leaving Iraq, we should have left a long time ago. We would have left if Obama hadn't been hoodwinked into coming back to their rescue. Twenty-three years, and we're roughly, I'd say, 18 years over our stay. We should have gotten out. Going to Jordan, what does that do?

What does going to Jordan do? We've got people killed in Jordan too, because Iran can hit anything in Jordan anytime it wants to. So I don't know what this is except a forced evacuation. Every leader that I've known in Baghdad has asked us to leave. The majority of every parliament has asked us to leave, and we've just stiffed them. We even built, for the Israelis, bases in the western desert from which they could spy on and attack Iran. It's time we left, and frankly, I'm happy we're leaving. We should have left a long time ago. But it is an indication, I think. We're not going to be in Southwest Asia on the ground with military forces of significance in the future, period. Iran will have kicked us out.

#Glenn

Well, what does that look like, anyways? Again, if we come to the end of this war, we avoid the use of nuclear weapons. What would the U.S. role in the region look like? Because I'm thinking it could be a good outcome for the United States. Again, as Trump suggested with the new national security strategy, if the U.S. wants to adjust to a multipolar world, it can't be everywhere. It indicated they want to focus on the Western Hemisphere and East Asia. So if he wants to reduce his presence in Europe and the Middle East, it can take this defeat and spin it as a victory. But I know that's a difficult sell to make. But if there is no option of restoring the bases in the Middle East, would it simply be pulling out? Because that would have global ramifications as well, even for the international or the U.S.-centric financial system.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Interestingly, back in the past, where Israel had some people who actually fought on occasion, and today there are one or two, they have postulated that one of the biggest mistakes the United States made was to put troops on the ground in the region. Israelis. Israelis who actually think that. And I think they're right. I think when Carter made his statement in '78, I think it was, that it was a vital interest to the United States, the last thing, as Colin Powell said again and again, the last thing we wanted to do in order to protect those vital interests was put actual U.S. forces on the ground in the region. And, of course, that's exactly what we did, led partly by the zealous person in Florida who commanded Central Command and wanted to have a real command.

And so it grew and grew and grew until he had forward headquarters that were bigger than his headquarters in Florida. That's another subject altogether, but that's the kind of thing that happens with our military complex. It makes its own rules in the world, as it were, and then turns around to

the president and says, "Oh, look, we're here." The Israelis, by and large, didn't think it was smart, and they were right, because it impeded their ability, and this is their ultimate goal, to become the hegemon of the region. Now, fighting their wars for them, that's okay. But get out after you do that. No, we lingered. We stayed around. So we even violated what real deep thinkers in Israel thought was the future for the region. Now we're at a point where I think that violation has caused us so much pain and agony and money. You know, Bill Harkin had a piece this morning.

Bill's probably the best tracker of this sort of thing. He's quoting OMB. He's quoting other sources. And I think he's short, but he's saying somewhere around \$60 to \$80 billion already. I think it's probably double that that we've spent when we start counting up all the casualties, both aircraft, ships, and so forth, and all the things we've lost in Kuwait and Bahrain and Qatar and so forth. So we are looking at a complete transformation, I think, a positive one, of the relationship with Israel. I know that sounds funny now that we've created a legislative thicket in these agreements and everything, but the Congress will get over that, I hope.

And we're creating a situation, if Israel isn't completely destroyed, and I think there's a real good chance it will be, but even then we're creating a better situation for ourselves, where management of our interests in the region will be a lot less costly in blood and treasure, a lot easier, and a lot more acceptable to the world community, in addition to the region. And Iran will be a power in that region. That's all reality now, I think. And we've got to confront that reality, and we've got to deal with it. The problem, of course, as you suggested, is the regionalization of this conflict, merging with Ukraine, Kaliningrad, the Arctic, and everywhere else that we are in grave tension with Russia right now.

And through Russia, even in the Arctic, with China. So there's every possibility that everything I'm saying is nonsense because we're going to regionalize and then globalize. Don't even say we're going nuclear—not yet, anyway. We're still going to regionalize, and we're then going to globalize because we have this hatred of them every day. And we have this hatred for Persia. And we seem to have a hatred for China now that is beyond what the hatred was as we transitioned from a competent president with regard to China, George W. Bush, into Donald Trump. Well, I'm not sure I would say that Obama's China policy was untoward. It was more measured. But the policy since Biden and Trump has been horrible, absolutely horrible.

#Glenn

One restraint on Trump's recklessness would be the capabilities. I mean, if the U.S. doesn't have the capabilities to widen the war and it doesn't happen by accident, that could be a source of optimism. But what do we actually know about the destruction—what kind of destruction the U.S. has experienced here in terms of not just manpower, but equipment, airplanes? I mean, if you're going into the midterms and you're a senator on the Democratic side, I would assume that they have some points to score if they expose the actual numbers of the damage.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Hard to do. Hegseth won't give them the data. And when he does try, or under real pressure, he lies. Bill's article is probably as close as you can get in terms of aircraft. We've lost dozens of Reaper drones at about 30 million a pop. And some of them were equipped outside the normal equipage. So you can say 40 or 50 million. We've lost quite a few refuelers. We've lost quite a few fighter aircraft, if you will, fighter-bomber aircraft. I'd say somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 to 90 billion. OMB, I think, said 32 billion or something like that, a range up to 60 billion. But it's double that, maybe triple that. We just can't keep doing this and expect any kind of return that's positive.

And as I've said before, the real essence of our fighting power is pretty much nothing, if at all. You know, we'd have to have a draft. We'd have to have a colossal mobilization. It'd have to be full mobilization, probably not partial mobilization. And we'd have to have a draft even to fill out our reserve components and our militia, because they aren't at strength either. We had a meeting in Congress recently where we talked to a couple of senators, and at that time, we had the head of what you might call the medical complex within the U.S. Army Reserve, which is the principal medical complex for field hospitals and such.

We couldn't even put a field hospital out. We didn't have enough doctors, enough practical nurses, enough nurses, enough medical technicians. Several states could put their assets together in the Guard and the Reserve, and we couldn't put a field hospital out. So conventionally, we're not. I keep coming back to this. Conventionally, we're not going to do it. We're certainly not going to stop China conventionally. So how are we going to do it? Well, there's one way to do it, and as far as I can see, one way only. That's to threaten big time and then, if necessary, use.

#Glenn

Yeah, as I said before, I'm currently in China, and I am going to these different conferences in different cities. And it's quite interesting, the rhetoric here, because they're still talking about win-win solutions, common development, peaceful development, cooperation. Good for them. Yeah, but I made the point, though, that they keep the same rhetoric they had over the past 20 years, that we can find ways of working together. I'm not sure if they have picked up on the panic in the West that we can't really compete, the desperation, the willingness to militarize when we don't compete economically. But

#Lawrence Wilkerson

My information, Glenn, is that Xi Jinping is in the process of revisiting his views. And I don't know if that was a direct result of his encounter with Donald Trump, or a combination of that and his observance of Trump at the UN General Assembly. I don't see how any world leader could observe

that and not think he was dealing with an idiot, an insane, mongrel fool. But my information is the Chinese are now having some very serious conversations about just how far forward in the foxhole they get. But I think the implication is they know they have to get in the foxhole.

#Glenn

Yeah, that's the problem. As I said, their main hope was that this whole transition from the unipolar moment to now, already the multipolar moment—I think they were hoping that they can reach some new agreement with the U.S. and its allies over a new status quo. But...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

I agree, and I think Putin felt the same way.

#Glenn

Yeah, but pessimism is setting in in both Moscow and Beijing on this issue, though. I think you're right. On the topic, though, of introducing the draft in the United States, this must be the worst possible time to do it. Not only are a lot of people not interested in fighting, but also this is such an unpopular war. I mean, we see the same in Europe. The leaders are talking about how we have to be ready again to die on the front lines for freedom or whatnot. But you don't see this enthusiasm for war in the public.

It just seems difficult to mobilize the whole public if there is no drive there, if the people aren't with it. And indeed, you see this in Europe. Chancellor Merz can chant for war, just made a speech that Russia is already at war with Europe. This kind of speech you don't want to hear out of a German leader. But the people, they're not buying it. I'm just wondering if it's the same in the United States. It's going to be very hard to mobilize the public in such an unpopular war.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

At the All-Volunteer Force Forum, we have been looking at this for about 15 years. On college campuses throughout the United States, we've been looking at it. And we have a little ditty that we usually share with one another when we get together: Canada and Mexico's populations will go up massively. Eighteen- to 24-year-olds, those in the susceptible draft bracket, if you will, female and male, are not going to answer the call. And we have the additional complication that we have legislation now, and we have actions going on, mechanical actions going on, to revamp and revise the Selective Service so that you don't have to report anymore as an 18-year-old or whatever.

It's just automatic. Well, this automaticity alone has alarmed a lot of people across America in that age bracket, and alarmed their parents and grandparents too. And so you've got a lot of talk going on right now that wasn't going on before that ramifies and amplifies what we discovered on these

college campuses, all to say that you are not going to have a successful draft. In fact, you're going to have increased populations around our borders because people are going to leave.

#Glenn

I was thinking as well, I did my army service back in the 1990s, and at that time I thought, okay, if you ever have to fight for your country, this is what you have to do. But today I can't imagine going to fight against Russia or Iran. These are such unnecessary things, stupid wars, so no, it would be out of the question. Just a last question: you mentioned before that, in terms of the war in Iran regionalizing, that it could merge with the Ukraine war. Just as a last question, how do you see that possibility? How would they merge? Because I initially thought when Zelensky was hitting Iranian ships to increase his own appeal or stock value in Washington, I thought that would be one way, but he seems to have scaled it back since.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Petered out, yeah, yeah. I think he thought better of it. But that's one way. The other way is insidious because you're correct, people forget that. I think it was third or fourth—Ukraine was third or fourth in the world's arms markets. U.S. was first, Russia, I think, was second. Ukraine was third or fourth, I can't remember. But they were very much involved, very much involved. It was a phenomenon that we monitored after the breakup of the Soviet Union and what eventually happened with Moscow's pushing Ukraine away, with the nuclear capability, bringing that back to Moscow, of course. But a lot of the things that Ukraine was doing for Russia kept on going on in Ukraine. So they were a huge arms merchant.

So they're connected to a lot of this region in that sense, and even more connected now with the more modern adaptation of weaponry for war, like drones and such. That's one way. Another way is the one you just suggested, though it seems like Zelensky did pull back from it. How much would that change, though, were this to get more and more critical in terms of world commerce, and Iran were the culprit in their eyes, and for the reasons we all know? I don't know. How much would Ukraine join in the effort and use that as an excuse, as the Norwegians are apparently doing, to go after Russian ships, this so-called ghost fleet that Russia uses to evade sanctions?

All these things have the potential to suddenly merge into, oh, wow, we really do have a problem. And when you were talking about the draft, all I could think about was Ursula and Merz and Macron and the rest of them. Macron's got so many problems in France, I don't know how he could ever break free. But they've got a lead, you know. Let's have Joan of Arc from the European Union out there in the front. Because you're right, I think. I don't see their populaces being any more interested in being drafted into these conflicts than I do our own.

But as I said, I see these conflicts merging increasingly, if for no other reason than that these leaders want war. And they'll go to any length and to any spot to create the cause, therefore. It's

kind of like 1914, but I think it's a little more complicated than 1914, even. And you don't have populations—and I think you could say Russia, Germany, France, and Britain all had a certain segment of their population that thought, as we know now, it'd be over in six months anyway. And they're all going to win. Each one of them was going to win. And we'd be home by Christmas. And it didn't turn out that way. And it won't turn out that way this time either.

#Glenn

The delusion is strong, especially in Europe. We have all these leaders talking about war with Russia, but nobody wants to define what victory would look like. No one will describe what such a war would be. What are we going to do? Launch missiles into Moscow and hope they don't retaliate? Are we going to send our few troops to the battlefield and hope that it will be limited to Ukraine and Russia? I mean, there's no... It's just...

#Lawrence Wilkerson

It does not make sense. None of this makes sense to me. I'm comparing it to what I left, which was tortured. I use that term guardedly. But nonetheless, it was fairly peaceful. And all of a sudden, here we are.

#Glenn

Well, Colonel, thank you so much for your time, as always.

#Lawrence Wilkerson

Take care. I'm sorry you had to.