

US C-17s SURGE to Israel, Russia Enters Iran War | Mark Sleboda

Trump's word that he won't attack Iran before midterms is looking increasingly hollow as Israel becomes the site of a US build up toward a major operation against Iran. Military affairs expert Mark Sleboda breaks down the realities of the imminent escalation on Iran and why Russia has just entered the war in an unexpected way. <https://boosty.to/therealpolitick> SUPPORT MARK HERE SUPPORT THE SHOW BY BECOMING A YOUTUBE MEMBER: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOxLhz6B_elvLflntSEfnzA/join PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iran #israel #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I'm joined by Mark Sloboda, geopolitical analyst, military affairs, international relations expert, to go over the latest developments. Well, Mark, I wanted to get your thoughts on all of these developments. First, we have what appears to be a buildup in Israel. And as you know, there has been a lot of talk about a potential U.S.-Israeli strike on Iran, while C-17 military transports have been increasing in recent days, with the IDF chief of staff saying that a return to strikes could come soon.

Now, we know a little bit about what might happen if they do, as Donald Trump and the Israeli regime—the Trump administration and the Israeli regime—were said to have been planning a three-day strike, a massive strike on Iran, which would target energy infrastructure, missile stockpiles, and military targets. We've heard that before. Now, I also wanted to get your thoughts on this Trump-Putin diesel deal, because according to reports, four million tons of diesel are going into the global market from Russia with an agreement with Donald Trump. Well, according to reports, this was only 30 hours of the total diesel use in the world.

But also there have been reports that, Mark, Russia may be importing Iranian diesel and then selling it back to the global market as part of the deal. That has not been verified, but I think it's a very interesting hypothesis. Your thoughts on what's going on here? Of course, the markets closed right as Donald Trump announced that. And what are your thoughts on what's going on in terms of the war against Iran? Are we going to see some kind of strike that leads to a postponement of the Israeli election, which seems to be picking up momentum? Your assessment on what's going on here?

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah, so we definitely have a complicated situation with both the leaders of the regimes that are principally attacking Iran, the U.S. and Israel, both facing domestic elections with uncertain results for both of them. And they are desperately trying to cling on to power. You know, Netanyahu more directly in general, but also with Trump. If he loses control of Congress—then even worse, both houses, both the House and the Senate—to the Democrats, he'll be facing impeachment charges for the next two years. And that will chew up a lot of his bandwidth and political capital, just struggling to avoid impeachment. Not that anyone should necessarily expect any major change in U.S. foreign policy towards Iran, because the Democratic Party are just as in bed with the Israeli lobby in Washington as the Republicans are.

They'll be happy to jump on Trump if they see blood in the water, but that doesn't mean that they're necessarily going to do anything that would cross AIPAC, that would cross the power of the lobby. So it's more what Trump is desperately doing. And obviously he is, at this point—he seems to be waffling in part on his policy towards Iran, in part, I think, definitely because of the stress on the global energy markets, and in part because of his fear of losing political control in the United States. And of course, that is to some degree affected by the global price of energy, which affects the price of gasoline and diesel and inflation in the United States. So that definitely has a political effect.

But we also can't forget that his hands are now tied, that there are real hard limits on the U.S. exercise of hard power geopolitically because of the shortage of munitions that they face and the low production rate of them, both the standoff interceptors, PAC-3, SM-3, SM-6, the interceptors, but also the standoff munitions that they need to attack Iran from outside Iranian airspace, the Tomahawks and the JASSMs and so forth. So all of these things are having Trump waffling back and forth, back and forth. And there's obviously a lot of disagreements within the Trump regime on how to proceed. There is no agreed-upon path. And quite obviously, some people are all hell-bent on going back full scale.

And if we just drop some more bombs on the Iranians, then we'll win, and others that never really wanted to do it in the first place and that are still arguing against it. But the U.S. is in a very bad geopolitical space, and it realizes that, you know, its hegemony is at stake. If the U.S. just surrenders the Hormuz Strait to Iran, which wasn't under Iranian control before Trump and Netanyahu launched their war on Iran, well, then that's a body blow to U.S. hegemony because hegemony is based in part on fear, right, and narrative and belief. And that would be the hegemon defeated, and everyone—no matter, even Trump couldn't spin his way out of that. Maybe to some Americans, maybe, you know, to the American base, he could spin that, but not to the rest of the world.

They're more—they live in less of a propaganda bubble than Americans do. So, and, you know, for the Americans out there, you know, that's why you're watching this, right? Yeah. So, he's waffling back and forth, and we had it—and I think this was credible, you know, from the New York Times and others in the Western media—that he has been given, in the past few weeks, six different plans

for attacking Iran or attacking Ansar Allah in Yemen or attacking both. And he's turned them all down, and now he's on a sixth plan, and he's still considering it, and whether to launch it before elections or after elections, and trying to figure out what effect either, you know, waiting or having it before elections.

Would it be good or bad? And then you have to toss the effects it would have on Netanyahu politically in his elections into the mix. And so you have, in both cases, domestic politics and the fears of these leaders and their desire to cling to power in their countries having geopolitical ripples. They're overriding what might be a more strategic foreign policy because they're more concerned at the moment with their domestic political futures. It's their personal reign of power that is more important to them at the moment than U.S. foreign policy. So, but, you know, they started this war. So that's in on it. So I don't think Trump knows what he's doing.

It's not so much, you know, people may say, "I know Trump is going to do this." I'm very skeptical of that because I don't think Trump knows what the hell he's doing. If the last six months tell us anything, it's that Trump doesn't know what the hell he's doing, right? He's swayed every 15 minutes by the last person he talked to. And he's trying to ride, you know, the current winds, the current dominant winds, tacking left, tacking right on all of this, while Netanyahu is consistently trying to manipulate Trump. And he's done a remarkably good job for the past, you know, four months now of the U.S. just carrying the entire war against Iran in one phase or another, while Israel steps back, continues to beat up on Gaza and Hezbollah in South Lebanon.

And other than that, really catch their breath, right? You know, restock as much as they can within that time period. So, I really don't think Trump knows what he's doing yet. He's considering plans. He's turning them in. He's turning them out. He's got people within his administration telling him one thing, telling him the other. And the last I heard is that Trump was considering either encouraging or at least giving the green light to Netanyahu to attack Iran before the Israeli elections on his own, which, really, not. And I mean, does he think that will somehow provide him with the political...? I mean, we've been through that before. That would be entirely a Groundhog Day thing, right?

#Danny

I mean, what happened last year?

#Mark Sleboda

It's exactly what happened this year, right? I mean, it started with Israel attacking, and then the U. S. had to step in, right? You know, yeah. It's—sometimes American political spin masters overthink how much Americans' vote is affected by the current vagaries of foreign policy.

#Danny

Because they aren't, really.

#Mark Sleboda

I mean, we know from polls that Americans don't support the war in Iran, but we don't know necessarily that that is necessarily going to have any effect on the American elections. So they might be obsessing about the whole thing a bit too much. On the other hand, we do know that Americans vote with their wallets, right, with their pocketbooks, or, you know, culture wars, on the other hand. And that's, you know, that's already decided, right? If you're on one side of that or the other, you know, that's what it is. But for the large amount of American independents, you know, that tack one way or the other, the current state of the economy and their spending power, right, and their belief about where their jobs, where the economy is, that does have an effect.

And what's happening in Iran does have an effect on that. There's no question about that, right? You cannot ignore the fact that the price of gasoline, that the price of diesel, that the general inflation rate in the United States has jumped significantly in the past six months. And all Trump's promises that he's going to bring that down—you know, words are wind when it comes to politicians, and even Americans understand that at some level, no matter how committed to either Coke or Pepsi they are as far as political ideology goes. So it's all very much up in the air. Certainly the U.S. has been building up forces, but they've also been building up forces for, you know, since the last round, right? There's always a constant stream of American military cars.

#Danny

Could you talk about what it is then? Because you said munition shortages. There's big issues with conducting a strike, and they're even saying three days, which is quite short, Telegraph. But what could these C-17s then be carrying to Israel? Because, you know, you said yourself that also Israel is trying to rearm. What could be happening here?

#Mark Sleboda

Okay, well, first of all, we know that the U.S. just sold an ungodly number of bombs to be dropped to Israel. Tens of thousands, just an insane number. I don't remember it off the top of my head. But the U.S. just made a major purchase so that Israel can continue to decimate the Gaza Strip and South Lebanon. So, you know, that's certainly a part of it. The Trump administration might be planning to risk going into Iranian airspace closer and trying to use JDAMs. They tried that a bit on Iran's southern coast in the last spat of, you know, kinetic violence, you know, and we saw them attempting to use glide bombs, getting in closer. So, you know, that could certainly be part of it.

They could be willing to, you know, try to make some initial strikes against the Iranian air defense and then take a risk, knowing that they'll lose more aircraft, likely in the process. Yeah, 40,000. Yeah, tens of thousands. Yeah, 40,000 one-ton bombs, right? You know, that's to be dropped. Let's

be clear: that is to be dropped on Gaza and South Lebanon, right? That's what it's there for. That is a genocide deal, right? I mean, that's, you know, to continue a green light, you know, giving the fuel in the tank for the Israeli genocide of both of those peoples. But there's also, of course, monthly production, right, of all of these munitions that we're talking. Yes, they're running out, but also every month they're making some more. Does that make up for what they've already spent?

No, but they constantly need to shuttle that back and forth. Plus, you have to remember that, in general, the U.S. is operating in this operation under really terrible logistical strain because of Iran's extremely successful strategic policy that was formulated by the IRGC of debasification: to knock out all of the U.S. bases in the region, principally, of course, the home of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain, which is making this naval blockade, and, you know, the carriers that most of these craft will fly off of. Resupply out of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, right? So there's a tremendous logistical strain. So obviously, there's an enormous amount of quite normal military goods that need to be constantly supplied to both the air wings in Israel, but also to this fleet.

And that's simply things like food, like fuel, like, you know, all of the normal things that it takes to keep tens of thousands of people on these ships alive, more or less, and functioning every day. So it doesn't necessarily have to be anything, you know, extremely sinister, you know, that, oh, they're shuttling you tactical nuclear weapons, although they could be doing that too, or they could just give the green light to Israel to do that if they wanted to be really stupid and compound a strategic blunder with the ultimate geopolitical taboo. I think there's a lot of Trump's generals that would try to dissuade him most vociferously from doing that yet, but we'll...

#Mark Sleboda

Of course, see in the end how desperate they get.

#Mark Sleboda

But ultimately, you know, even without an immediate plan to escalate again into a kinetic phase with Iran, the U.S. military is constantly rebuilding up for that contingency with whatever production they're making every month. And again, they have to do a certain amount of military transport just to keep that blockade functioning. And it's not doing well. Those ships and those crews are under enormous strain. That's supposedly why they're sending this third carrier, supposedly, is supposed to replace one of the—Teddy Roosevelt they're sending is supposed to replace one of the ones already on site. Of course, that will give them a window where there's three and, you know, they could use that to escalate again, certainly.

But in general, it's—Trump projects a very good bluster and bluff of ultimate power, but the U.S. military, in particular the U.S. Navy, is operating on, you know, what I call bubble gum and rubber bands at this moment, duct tape. They're overstretched. There was a recent military report that is done monthly, and the chief of naval operations, you know, had a non-concurrence statement that

they didn't agree with continuing the blockade and a policy of any more military escalation against Iran, because that's the state that the U.S. Navy is in. Now, of course, they're going to do it if ordered to do so. But it was their opinion, right, that, you know, it's not a good idea, that they're not in good condition for that.

So, I mean, the hard geopolitical limit of American military power is being experienced not just with this shortage of munitions, but also with general overstretch and fatigue of what forces that they have. Remember, some 33% of the U.S. Navy has been tied up for half the year in this blockade of Iran. That's an enormous amount of strain on it. It cannot continue indefinitely. And Iran knows that, which is why they're continuing to take the suffering to their own economy, which is definitely suffering domestically. The New York Times recently had a piece out, and even the head of the Iranian National Security Council, Rezaei, commented that, you know, that Iran is facing an economic crisis.

Although his words were vastly blown out of proportion then by the Western media, you know, we have to take that with a grain of salt. But there is an argument being made by the head of Kepler, the tanker traffic monitor, that Iran has actually, for the last several weeks, been accepting large tolls from the Gulf states to allow them to pass unmolested through the Strait of Hormuz, even through the southern corridor, although, you know, promoted by the U.S. quietly at night, and that that, you know, has temporarily served the purposes of everyone, effectively. Iran needed cash to, you know, needed a flow of money in order to alleviate the effects on their own population of this blockade and the sanctions and everything else.

But Trump also, you know, got into Trump mode there, you know, to boast about that more oil was getting out and prices would be coming down soon, and, "I have complete control of the straits," and all of this. And the Arabs, you know, in particular, it must be said, I think one of the major ones doing this was Iraq. Iraq has quietly suffered more from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, I think, than just about any other Gulf state. And Iraq, of course, has complicated relations. They may have just gotten rid of the last of the U.S. occupation forces, supposedly, but they're still, you know, under U.S. geopolitical constraints. At the same time, there's a tremendous amount of political sentiment within the dominant Shia political factions in Iraq that Iran is not their enemy.

So basically, the argument that the head of Kepler makes is that Iraq was quietly paying large sums of money to the Iranians to allow ships full of oil to get out. And Trump was agreeing to it, basically, and allowing the Iraqis to do it because, you know, he's worried about prices and the U.S. election, while at the same time he could trumpet that oil was getting out, even though it would technically still be under Iranian control. So there's a whole lot of narrative games going on and some economic, shall we say, movement under the covers that seems likely. Because the entire Western media last week was all, "Oh, Iran has suddenly lost their ability to reach out and hit tankers." And I'm like, how did that happen? I mean, how did Iran's...

#Mark Sleboda

Anti-ship cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, regular cruise missiles, sea mines, right? Aerial drones, underwater drones, surface drones, artillery even, right? You know, all these things they could use to reach out and hit ships. How did it all just suddenly disappear? Because the U.S. wasn't even attacking them, right? And I was very skeptical of that whole thing. And I said, the oil is getting through, such as it is, only because Iran is agreeing to it for some reason. And I did note that the UN General Assembly annual meeting at the president, prime minister level was going on.

And certainly Iran probably didn't want to be blowing up a lot of ships in the Strait of Hormuz during that period. Bad optics and everything. So I think they made a calculation and allowed more oil to get through when they were taking 20 or 30 percent of the price of the cargo to allow them to get through, even using, you know, the prescribed southern corridor. And since that all ended down in the last week, Iran has hit, I think, some 16 ships that have been verified right in the Strait of Hormuz, obviously just trashing all of these people that said, "Oh, Trump has gained control of the straits and Iran has lost the military ability," which was always just wishful thinking and fantasy.

But again, there's games going on. There's games going on within the playbook. And we have to remember these games. We have to remember that under the previous administration, Biden and Iran, the Iranian leaders made several agreements on face-saving fake attacks against each other, right? Several times to avoid going to direct war with each other, like Trump did when he came into office. So things are agreed to at various levels, you know, that is not revealed to the general public. That has to be kept under consideration. So I definitely think that Iran is reasserting control. Now they said they're going to completely stop the southern corridor.

I certainly believe they have the ability to do this. No matter what Trump says, there is not one iota of evidence that any manned U.S. Navy ship has entered the Strait of Hormuz at any time during the whole length of this conflict. Not one bit of evidence. They always say, "Oh, U.S. forces were escorted." Then occasionally you'll see a ship was escorted. They were escorted at night from above. Oh, you know, by a helicopter or a drone or an aircraft providing moral support from up there, right? Or potentially they were sending—we know they were sending underwater drones into the Strait of Hormuz.

Some of them that were attempting to remove mines, some of them also, you know, providing possibly some kind of escort duty. But as far as a manned Navy ship, nope. And right now, after Iran started firing off their anti-ship ballistic missiles, you know, all evidence is that the U.S. Navy actually retreated like a thousand kilometers away from the Iranian coast. So that is all things that we have to factor in when we consider, is the U.S. about to—because they'll have to get in much closer to launch aircraft, right? They have to. Most of those aircraft will be launched off of carriers. Yes. The U. S. has retreated from most of their bases in the Middle East to either Jordan or Israel, right? And that's, you know, part of the buildup in Israel as well, as the U.S. has moved a lot of their forces there.

So just to maintain them there and keep up, you know, the level of munitions for their own aircraft, you know, and maintenance parts and all of that, that has to be transported as well. So, you know, I really don't know. I'll be perfectly honest. I don't know if Trump is going to attack. I know that he wants to attack again, but whether that's going to be before the election or after the election, you know, if he's talking a three-day strike, I have to imagine that would be a three-day strike and then declare victory and try to go home. Because why would anyone believe that three more days of bombing, after all the previous rounds have failed, you know, even if they conducted more decapitation strikes and wiped out a whole other swath of the Iranian leadership?

That's still not going to bring down the Iranian government. Now, they have been playing more games lately, I think, also the CIA and Mossad, in trying to do what they should have done previously, in previous years, if they really wanted to bring down Iran, is internal destabilization with exploiting minority groups. Right. In the last week, Iran has continued to hit the Kurds, the Iranian Kurds in Iraq and in Iraqi Kurdistan, at the bases there. And if they're hitting them again and again, that certainly means that they're detecting some type of buildup or preparation, and they're taking advantage of that. But also there has been a lot of increased violence there in Southeast Iran, in Balochistan. There have been a number of police killed there, a lot of street fighting and escalation.

And also, according to reports, increased organization of the different Balochian insurgent groups, which is almost certainly probably coming from Mossad and the CIA. I think it's late in the game. If they really wanted to do that, they should have had everything prepared years—you know, started preparing years before they launched these attacks on Iran. And I was a bit surprised when they didn't appear to have that card in their hand when they went into the first round of attacks. But obviously, shall we say, late in the game, they're trying to activate the Baluchi insurgents and possibly the Kurds as well. But if they haven't done it till now, then their efforts in that, I just think they'll be very small.

They won't have that great of an effect because if they really had the strength there, they would have had to have been building that up for years, and they already would have used it. But they will certainly try to increasingly also destabilize Iran from within, and the Baluchi and the Kurdish separatists, and possibly some Azeris as well, you know, that will definitely be a part of the mix. And we have to remember that the U.S. always keeps the Mujahedin-e-Khalq on their leash in Albania. That could be thrown into the mix, and those rabid dogs could be thrown into it as well. So, again, you should not completely underestimate the U.S.'s and Israel's ability to, or desire to, escalate against Iran, even after all these repeated failures.

I don't think they can win this. I think that Iran still has all the power, all the leverage, but they can do, of course, an incredible amount of damage. And it also has to be said that the whole outbreak of what started as the Saudi-Ansar Allah, the Houthi war, that whole reignition is just a subset. It's important to understand that war, of course, is part of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, right? It's just a proxy periphery fight against it concerning the Bab el-Mandeb Straits. But in the last week, we've had a huge new war—I don't even know where this bomb is going to drop—but a horizontal

escalation of the entire conflict. Because according to reports and the statements from the Pakistani prime minister, Pakistan has entered the war against Ansar Allah.

They're bombing Yemen. They have military trainers and specialists on the ground now. And Pakistan has, you know, a substantial military force that can't be questioned. Now, mea culpa, earlier this week, I was, you know, asked about this, and I said the most the Turks and the Pakistanis are going to do is sit around in Saudi Arabia and make a pretense of providing some additional air support. And, you know, that's it, a token presence. I could not have foreseen, and I don't know anyone who really believed, that Pakistan would be sending troops to Yemen and start bombing Ansar Allah. And that's what they've done, which tells us the Saudis must be shelling out an enormous amount of money to incentivize the Pakistanis to be doing that.

#Danny

Yeah.

#Mark Sleboda

But that's not a good development for Ansar Allah. And it's very bad for the entire conflict as a whole, because Pakistan has positioned itself up until now as a kind of neutral mediator, right, between Iran and the United States. In fact, they've helped Iran out as far as trade across the land border goes. And how are we now supposed to understand this? Iran will understand this as Pakistan entering the war on the side of Israel and the United States, right? That's how they'll read it. And I'm not so sure that reading is wrong. Now, the Turks, as part of this new Mecca defense alliance, they said they're not going to be—Erdogan says they're not going to be attacking Ansar Allah, that they're not going to be attacking Yemen. But Erdogan, that's everything with the cunning beast.

You always have to look for what he really means. There's a push for his pet al-Qaeda on a leash in the Islamic State, formerly known as Syria, al-Jolani, to have al-Jolani take 10,000 or 20,000 of the jihadis that are serving him no real useful purpose right now and are probably a bit of a problem for him, to Yemen to fight. And so why would Turkey waste their own military forces when they can send some jihadi cannon fodder left over from Syria, which of course has troops left, also jihadi cannon fodder left over from Libya and the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict, and now send them on to fight Ansar Allah? And al-Jolani hasn't signed off on that yet, but there's been... Erdogan previously wanted to use them against Hezbollah. He was making a big deal out of that as well.

So this is all kinds of escalation, right? We definitely have Pakistan right now entering the war against the Axis of Resistance. And al-Qaeda could be joining them as well. I mean, al-Qaeda and Pakistan both jumping to the defense of Israel and Trump. I mean, that's the insanity of where we are. I mean, this war just keeps expanding horizontally across the entirety of the Middle East now, and there's all kinds of ripples starting to appear across East Africa because Israel is pushing to set

up military bases in the separatist area of Somaliland and also in Ethiopia as well. And the surrounding countries in East Africa have just put out a joint declaration—Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, right?—saying that they're very much against any Israeli presence in East Africa.

East Africa, in Ethiopia or in Somaliland. And what would Israel use bases in the Red Sea for? For gaining control of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and going after the Houthis, of course, right? So all kinds of quiet movements being made against Ansar Allah here. They're going to be having some tough times ahead, the Fremen of the Middle East. Things are going to be piling on them in a way that they haven't before, because the U.S. and Israel were never willing to put boots on the ground. They just wanted to play whack-a-mole against the Houthis from the air, and that never really did anything.

Well, now it seems there is a greater push, even if it's via PLC proxies coupled with al-Qaeda proxies from Syria, to actually send some cannon fodder on the ground to fight them, as well as the air cover. It's, uh, that is, that caught my attention on Friday when the news came across my desk, and I was like, "What?" Because I was literally on Rachel Blevins' show earlier in the week saying Pakistan's not going to do anything, and I was—I'll say it right—I was completely wrong. I don't know anyone else who was right on that, but it definitely caught me by surprise. It's making me recalculate a lot of things, and it's really going to put Ansar Allah in a tough position moving forward, which is going to put Iran in a tough position.

#Danny

Well, I guess we'll have to see how fast they can mobilize and begin to counter Ansar Allah, because from what I'm hearing today, Saudi Arabia is taking an absolute pounding.

#Mark Sleboda

They're taking a beating. That's why they're calling in al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda, and everyone else.

#Danny

They better go fast.

#Mark Sleboda

Their infrastructure, their airports... Saudi airspace is effectively closed by the Houthis. That's amazing. That's got to be humiliating to think, of Saudi Arabia.

#Danny

Better get that military support fast from these, I guess, unsavory friends, because it's getting real ugly right now, especially when it comes to, yeah, Riyadh, the King Khalid Airport, all of the oil, and Jeddah. Everything's on fire, it seems like. Yeah.

#Mark Sleboda

If the east-west pipeline pumping stations keep being hit, and things like these refineries, with the accuracy that they are being hit, that requires satellite data. That cannot be done without satellite data and maybe even guidance, which means... it's probably Russia. And Russia is playing a very complicated game in all of this. And the whole waters have been just murkyed up again with this out-of-the-blue announcement also yesterday, on Friday, that there is a new supposed very malodorous, stinky diesel deal, right, between Russia and the U.S. So we know that the price of diesel is going up around the world, right, particularly, of course, in the U.S. and the EU, but elsewhere as well.

And there's two factors to that. The biggest factor, of course, is Trump's war on Iran and the effect that's having both on the crude oil that is then transformed, but also the refining facilities in the Middle East. But a secondary effect is also the Kiev regime-U.S. attacks on Russian oil refineries that have been occurring since last year, for the last year really, right? Because they started last August, so already more than a year. And they continually do an amount of damage that is not overwhelming, but constantly brings down Russian refined production. Now, the two biggest exporters of diesel in the world normally, the first one is the United States and the second one is Russia.

Now, a few months ago, when there was a renewed attack on these refineries, Russia banned the export of diesel to make sure that they had enough diesel for their own domestic purposes and, of course, for the special military operation. And they do. Russia actually, as the Western media grudgingly admitted, as Reuters admitted last year, has an incredible amount of surplus or redundant refining capacity. But most of that capacity is specifically for the production of diesel. They actually don't make a lot of gasoline. In fact, on a yearly basis, during peak summer vacation travel season, Russia, even in normal peacetime, often has to import some gasoline. They don't make a lot of it. The refineries aren't geared for it, right? They make diesel.

And when Russia took their diesel off the market, that compounded the general rise in the prices of diesel and global shortages because of what Trump was doing against Iran and then Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz. And then about a month ago, it received a further body blow because China also banned the export of diesel. So everyone was circling around. Trump was considering a ban on diesel exports from the United States, and that would have completely effed over the Europeans because the Europeans are now completely reliant. They make very little diesel of their own. And they cut themselves off from Russian diesel with their, you know, shooting-themselves-in-the-lung sanctions. And so they became completely reliant on the U.S. And the threat of the U.S. banning the export of diesel must have absolutely terrified them.

They're suffering from incredible diesel prices. I mean, there are reports in the last few weeks of French gas stations, for instance, just absolutely running out of diesel or gasoline or both. A huge energy crisis in Europe. I think France is feeling it the worst, but other countries as well. And diesel, I mean, for those who don't know, of course, diesel powers all the trucks on the road, right, that do cargo deliveries. It powers all of the agricultural machinery. It powers all, you know, it's used for all industrial machinery. So if the price of diesel goes up, inflation goes up, right, very significantly. And now the analysts that are tracking, you know, this global energy crisis are saying now that the real problem is not even oil per se, but specifically refined oil, specifically diesel.

So Trump is desperate to get more diesel. He forced the Europeans to—he blackmailed them two weeks ago to release their emergency reserves of diesel onto the global market, saying that if you don't do that, then I'll ban exports of American diesel. So if you don't release the diesel that I've already sold you, I won't sell you any more. That was the type of blackmail that was going on. So they quickly and quietly kowtowed and agreed to that release over a period of time. But obviously that's not enough, not fast enough, as Trump is so worried about the price of inflation and also just generally the public perception of what is happening to those prices going into these elections.

So, as part—evidently, as part of that Witkoff and Kushner, the Chuckle Brothers, campaign trip to Moscow a couple of weeks ago—it seems that they were quietly even then beginning this. And so the U.S. is going—this is just, it stinks to me. I don't like—I don't like the whole thing. I know that Russia is maneuvering here, and they're trying to weaken the entire sanction—international, you know, West—not international, but the entire Western sanctions regime against Russia. But they've agreed, supposedly, in various tranches over a period of time, to remove their export ban and to release diesel onto the global market. And Trump will trumpet that as bringing down global diesel prices, and he'll try to ride that into the elections. So on that hand, Putin can be seen as doing Trump a personal political favor.

And you have to wonder, of course, Putin is not doing this out of the goodness of his heart or any love of Trump, who, along with the Kiev regime, tried to kill him last year in that drone attack on Valдай. So there's a complicated game going on here. But part of the deal is supposedly, of course, that the Kiev regime will have to stop attacks on Russian oil refineries in order for Russia to increase the amount of diesel that they can export. And Zelensky is absolutely furious about this. He feels that he's being stabbed and an end run around him. He pulled his negotiators back early from the United States this weekend. And he's badmouthing Trump pretty publicly. And since that deal was announced, they already got a few drones in through last night on Tver.

Russian oil refinery on Rostov-on-Don and had a few more successful hits and did some more damage. Now, maybe it was just storage tanks. I don't know the actual extent. Nothing has been critical because Russia has simply too much capacity, too much surge capacity for refining, too much ability to restore what is damaged fairly quickly. They've demonstrated that for more than a year of attacks on their refineries. But it's supposedly flying in the face of what Trump is saying, that

Ukraine needs to stop the attacks on Russian refineries. Here's the thing: that's all bullshit. It's all theater.

Because these attacks are carried out by the CIA, right? And this was admitted to. This is not, like, a secret. This is known because the CIA bragged about it in the last year on the front pages of The New York Times and The Washington Post and elsewhere: that they are directing, you know, not only providing the targeting data, the satellite data, but actually directing these attacks against Russia's oil refineries, down to the point that they were directing the Ukrainian attack long-range drones to attack specific components within the refineries that would cause longer downtime, that it would take longer for Russia to repair the damage.

They were also behind directing the attacks on Russia's civilian tankers, right, and the global maritime shipping industry, the shadow fleet that was carrying Russian oil and refined oil products around the world. So this is all smoke and bullshit. Either that, or Trump needs to sit down. And if you want to believe a beneficent Trump, which I don't believe, then Trump needs to sit down and take control of his own CIA. Because who just hit Rostov-on-Don last night? Well, it wasn't the regime on their own. They could not have done that without the CIA. There's no way. So there's a very complicated game going on here.

Personally, I don't think any of this is going to happen. I don't know whether Trump wants it. Does the U.S. deep state want it? Does the U.S. Congress want it? No, of course we know that. We know the Europeans don't want it, even no matter. They would rather their own people not be able to have heat in the morning rather than take Russian energy. And we know that because the British government told schools across the UK in the last week that they're going to have problems heating schools, and kids should be advised to wear their winter coats inside the schools if they're cold. I mean, when I say that, I'm not being facetious.

I'm being absolutely literal. The European political elite would rather have their own people freeze to death, right, rather than capitulate and accept Russian victory in the proxy war in Ukraine. So there's a lot of games. And of course, it must be taken into account that whenever Putin is talking to Trump, and whenever this supposed deal came about, the Kremlin has been very short of words for what Trump has been trumpeting very loudly on social media. Don't forget that Putin's previous career was Russian intelligence, or Soviet intelligence before that. He was KGB, he was FSB, and absolutely, he has a psychological profile of every leader that he comes into contact with.

And he is as well aware, and probably far more than we are, of how susceptible Trump is to manipulation. Right. And so everything that Putin does or says about Trump is meant to flatter him, to play to his ego, to, you know, sow division within the administration. Of course, every leader does that. Even Trump's own people within his own administration, the entire game is how to manipulate Trump. And John Bolton admitted that in his book. Everything is about manipulating Trump. And

Trump, for his part, this is his idea of leadership, that everyone is supposed to come and try to flatter him and play to his ego. He likes playing the king or the emperor, and that everyone should come and bow down before him and try to manipulate him.

So everyone plays to his ego, to flatter him. You know, he is an absolute egomaniacal megalomaniac. So everything that Russia is doing here, of course, is meant to sow more discord between the U.S. and the EU, between Trump and Zelensky. Even if Trump is largely a figurehead, he still has some agency, even perhaps to sow discord between Trump and his own intelligence agencies, the deep state. So we'll see how much this actually happens because, of course, if Russian refineries keep getting hit, Putin's going to say, "Oh, I know, I promised, but you couldn't keep your dog on a leash, and I don't have any excess diesel to sell you. Sorry." So, you know, we could hear an announcement like that in the coming weeks.

But also, I have to imagine there's going to be rebellion there against this announcement. The Western media is already just in a froth about the whole thing, right? And they're already jumping back on Russiagate-like conspiracy theories and everything. But, you know, there's, again, there's a very complicated psychological as well as geopolitical game going on here. And I think we're only seeing the tip of this very dirty iceberg publicly. But it still makes me a little nauseous, I have to say. I have to say, right up there, the idea of giving Trump anything makes me a little ill at this point, even if I know that the Russian government certainly has complicated ulterior motives to all of this beyond just, of course, making some cash on a high price of diesel.

#Danny

Yeah, well, some on social media were outraged because they thought it was a betrayal of Iran. But last time I checked, Mark, the amount that has been agreed on is actually a small figure. I mean, the four million tons sounds huge because people think tons. They think of, oh wow, you know, really big, heavy things. But in terms of barrels per day, it doesn't really cover global supply for what it means.

#Mark Sleboda

It's certainly more about the psychological effect on the market and on U.S. public opinion going into it.

#Danny

Yeah, right. Exactly. Exactly.

#Mark Sleboda

But even then, you have to say, why is Putin doing it? What is he getting out of this that he would give Trump this political gift, this tool, even if it's not a great tool? And certainly Russia is getting some of this. Now, remember, you can say that. But I mean, of course, Russia very much wants—one of their primary motives here is to make sure that the Iranian government survives, that there isn't regime change in Iran. But is it necessarily in Russia's absolute national interest that they want Iran to control the Strait of Hormuz at the end of this? No, not necessarily. I mean, they wouldn't necessarily object to it, but they're not absolutely wedded to that idea either. So keep that in mind. Also, remember China.

During the whole first phase, the first whole phase of dueling blockades, you know, of this geoeconomic game of chicken, China was not buying oil. They were largely using their own very large strategic reserves for their purposes and were vastly reducing the amount of oil that they were buying out of global markets. And that was keeping the price of oil lower. So you could make the same argument that that is a betrayal of Iran, that they were essentially pushing back against higher potential Iranian leverage against the United States by working not directly in tandem with the Trump administration in trying to suppress the price of oil. Why? Because Iran is okay—China is okay with a slight increase in the price per barrel of oil, but they don't want a global depression.

Right. They have an export economy. So all of these countries, right, Russia and China, both have a vested geopolitical interest in making sure that the Iranian government survives this conflict with the United States. And they are happy to see the U.S. frittering away its strength in all kinds of means, going after Iran and to help Iran in that process. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they're committed to, you know, supporting the axis of resistance more widely or, you know, foresee it as some type of *Götterdämmerung* bringing down the hegemon or, you know, that they necessarily need to see Iran in complete control of the Strait of Hormuz at the end of this, because they don't.

That might not be contrary to their national interests, but it's not necessarily part of their national interests either. So they're playing to their own national interests now because they feel safe enough that the Iranian government is not going to be toppled by the U.S. anytime soon. So other concerns do take a place. Now, remember, also during this entire conflict, the Western media has been screaming about Russian satellite data provided to the Iranians and Russian drone technology being provided to the Iranians and Russian drones and cruise missiles being provided to the Iranians.

You know, you got to wonder, when Hezbollah is suddenly showing so much ability with the fiber optic drones taking down Merkava tanks, who is it that pioneered use of fiber? Oh yeah, it was Russia in the conflict in Ukraine. I wonder how they ended up with Hezbollah, and I don't know how that happened, why they suddenly know how to use those things really well, right? So yes, there's so much complicated game going on here. And always remember, it's very hard for people to remember because most of those people out there watching this show and my own show and out there, right, we're possessed of what you could call a multipolar ideology, right? Some from the left, some from the right. But we all very much lament the state of a Western society, of a U.S.-led

Western global hegemony dominating the world. And, you know, in one vision of it or another, I think most of us out there want to see a more multipolar world. And that's okay.

I believe the same thing. But, for one, it's important to understand that the Russian and the Chinese governments do not operate from that ideological framework. They are entirely realist, cold-blooded, even realpolitik, foreign policies, right? They're concerned about their national interests first and foremost. They might have some, you know, down their list of priorities, four or five, you know, might be a multipolar world. Sounds like it might be better for us. But they are not committed to that ideology, only where it intersects with their own national interests. So, most of the people out there watching this show have more of a, shall we say, wider multipolar axis of resistance ideological alignment than the actual Russian and Chinese governments do.

And what I try to do, and don't always succeed, is, as an analyst, to divorce myself from that ideology that I have as well, in order to understand what these men and other governments are doing. And I don't always succeed in it, but that rubs people the wrong way sometimes. I don't say it because I don't have that ideology, but because I think it's necessary to put it to the side to understand what these governments are doing. So don't always think that Russia and China are doing the best thing to hasten the end of U.S. hegemony or for Iran's greater power in the region or something like that. They're primarily concerned with their own national interests first, and these other things only then down the line. And I know that's hard. And the same thing, of course, with Palestine.

I know there's a lot of really pretty ridiculous trolls out there. You see them in the comments. Putin is a secret Zionist and is married and has a love child with Netanyahu and all of this because Russia won't commit to destroying Israel in the Middle East. No, Russia has long recognized the state of Palestine, which no country in the West does. They have long supported independent Palestine. They talk to Hamas. They always provide, you know, humanitarian support to the Palestinians. Do they still do business with Israel? Yes, less and less over the last few years as geopolitics rears its head and beyond. Yes, they reached a modus vivendi with Iran during the operation in Syria not to turn their air defense on Israel, because they didn't go into Syria to fight Israel for the sake of the Palestinians.

They have sympathy for the Palestinians, but the fate of the Palestinians is simply outside of Russia's geopolitical horizons. It's the same thing with the Chinese, right? And I know that the Palestinian cause, rightly so, is near and dear to many people's hearts, and it should be. Someone out there needs to put it first in their concerns and thoughts. But understand that while the Russian government has sympathy for them and they are not secret Zionists or any of that nonsense, it's still not highly prioritized in terms of their own national interests. And people need to understand it's not about ideology for these governments. It's about realist foreign policy.

#Danny

Yeah, well, you know, I'm a materialist, and I think that with the way that Russia and China approach these questions, particularly Iran, West Asia, you know, the development of themselves and their national interests, I mean, those really—if that doesn't happen, then the multipolar world doesn't really happen either in many respects, because there is no real multipolar world. There is no strengthening of it without the material interests and the national interests of countries that are developing it met.

And I think that's why you see—and this is what always gets me, and we can close on this—is, you know, for people in the United States and the West, anger about Israel, anger about the United States and what it does, a very just anger about—yeah, they—but it's the—I agree, but, right, the responsibility, right, if there's going to be a stronger multipolar world as a whole, it's ultimately going to have to be U.S. and Western people in the West that are going to have to change their political processes.

#Mark Sleboda

Even the Arab people of the Middle East, because the last time I checked, the only Arab people in the Middle East that have actually struck Israel on behalf of the Palestinians is the friggin' Ansar Allah. The Fremen of the Middle East may just be the most multipolar, moral people on the face of the planet, which, you know, may be a bit of crow for all of us to eat.

#Danny

Yeah, no, incredibly politically advanced, and they make very concerted decisions, too, to align themselves with Russia and China. They never, in any of their blockades—now we're counting, what, two in the last two years to three years?—they've never targeted Russia and China, for a good reason. This is why I always say, it's like, well, you know, we see, you know, the Axis of Resistance, the Houthis being the state leader, and then, of course, many forces, Ansar Allah as part of the state in Yemen. Yes, Hezbollah is part of the state in Lebanon, yes. But in terms of the entirety of it, I think there's a reason why you see Russia and China, even if they don't do everything that we, those who have—yeah, exactly—wish they would do. I think they see it more from a materialist lens, too. They see it more as like, well, what are the outcomes? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks?

#Mark Sleboda

Particularly with the Chinese, they're playing a long game against the U.S. And they understand they can't win every battle everywhere in the world all of the time. Both of them understand that. I think the Chinese even understand it a bit more. It's just part of their political culture and society. Sometimes you have to be a bit cold-blooded when it comes to these things, unfortunately.

#Danny

Yeah. Well, I want to thank everyone who became a new member. I'm pulling you all up now. Thank you so much for the super chats.

#Mark Sloboda

No, I will not come back to the U.S., and I will not run for president.

#Danny

Sorry. Thanks so much, Carlos, everybody, Paul. And thanks to all the moderators, of course, for making the chat a great place to be. In the video description below, Mark Sloboda's Boosty account is there, where he does all of his work, publishes it, so support him there. All the places to support this channel are also in the video description below. Hitting the like button ensures that more people see this video and this show after we are done. Mark, it was great being with you. We're going to head out now. I'll be back tomorrow with our friend, Professor Mohammad Marandi, to go over the developments. I'll watch that, 1 p.m. Eastern Time, October 11th. All right, everybody. I'll see you all tomorrow. Bye-bye.