

Iran CLOSES Strait of Hormuz, Hits US BASES | KJ Noh & Rachel Blevins

Independent journalists and analysts KJ Noh and Rachel Blevins react to the preemptive strikes launched by Israel on Iran as Trump green lights full-scale war. Trump just made a fatal decision to attack that could change everything. Follow Rachel Blevins: <https://www.youtube.com/@UCR0qQlSkMnffysEChGKqFpQ> FOLLOW ME ON RUMBLE: <https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong> FOLLOW ME ON TELEGRAM: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> SUPPORT THE CHANNEL ON PATREON: <https://www.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 #trump #ww3

#Danny

Hey everyone, welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by two friends of the show—independent journalist Rachel Blevins and geopolitical commentator and analyst KJ Noh. Thank you guys for coming on today in this very wild time.

#Speaker 02

Yeah, thank you so much for having us. Good to be with you, Danny.

#Danny

Yeah, well, let's get started. I think the big news, of course, is that Israel and the U.S. launched their war of aggression on Iran overnight, or in the early morning hours of the last day of February. Now, Iran is saying that over 200 people have been killed by these strikes, including a horrific massacre at a school for young girls in a small city in Iran. I wanted to ask KJ first, because the big news coming out now, in terms of Iran's retaliation, is that there are reports the Strait of Hormuz has been closed by Iran. It's being reported by Reuters—although I can't get past the paywall anymore—but here's a summary: Iran has been telling vessels that they are closing the Strait of Hormuz, where about 20% of the world's oil supply could potentially come to a halt.

This comes as Iran's retaliation has involved at least 200 missiles—many of them older models—and drones launched into Israel and essentially all of the U.S. bases, causing significant damage. Iran says it has a lot more on the table. KJ, what's your response to all this? What's your reaction? We're seeing a full-scale war essentially declared by the United States and Israel, and Iran is responding rapidly—within less than a day—to the point of closing the Strait.

#Speaker 02

Well, you know, U.S. war strategy—what’s known as air-sea battle or air-land battle—is traditionally “shock and awe.” It’s basically a decapitation strategy: you go in, suppress enemy air defenses, and then rapidly decapitate command and control. And the Iranian leadership has said, you know, you haven’t done anything. All you’ve done is kill civilians—you’ve killed 85 schoolchildren. I mean, if that’s your idea of decapitating the leadership, something’s not right. But Iran is retaliating rapidly. It has 17 types of missiles, eight of which can reach Israel, and it’s hitting all the U.S. bases.

You know, the U.S. has attacked 24 provinces, including key cities—Tabriz, Tehran, Qom, Isfahan, Shiraz, and of course Minab. But Iran is hitting back hard. You’re seeing attacks on Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE, and I think the U.S. bases are looking highly vulnerable. We’re seeing explosions, we’re seeing missiles landing, and of course the Strait of Hormuz is involved. There are other targets too—Tel Aviv has also been hit. So I think this is exactly as they promised. The U.S. wanted a rapid decapitation, but what they didn’t understand is that Iran has the capacity to retaliate. It ducked, and now it’s swinging back. And I think there are going to be unintended consequences—unforeseen results.

#Danny

Yeah, Rachel, and I'll put that list up again. This is from Weissgrad, which is no friend of Iran—certainly a Zionist entity in the media. And this list is pretty stunning. We're talking about a response that comes after the United States and Israel have attacked. And now the Strait of Hormuz is in question, and there are reports that Donald Trump is not happy with what’s transpired in just the last 12 or so hours. What’s your reaction to all of this?

#Speaker 03

Yeah, I don't blame Trump for not being happy, because he came out with that grand eight-minute video at the start of all this. You’d think from that video that Iran was about to fall—that whoever was in Trump’s ear, telling him how things were going to go, was saying, “Look, we’re going to carry out these decapitation strikes. We’re going to take out Iran’s top leader, the Ayatollah. We’re going to take out the Iranian president. And then we’ll call on the people of Iran to fill the streets,” because that’s what Trump said. He said he was doing what no U.S. president had ever done. So I’d expect a little bit of frustration from him at this point, several hours in.

And maybe he's on social media, maybe he's not. But he's looking around, thinking, OK, we don't have confirmation that these top Iranian leaders have been killed. If anything, we've heard nothing—the opposite, really. We've heard statements saying that everyone’s safe except for a couple of lower-level commanders. And Iran has been retaliating, which shows their military is still very much intact. So whoever gave Trump the OK—the go-ahead, the “we’ve got this” for the U.S. military—did

so, I think, a little too soon and with too much confidence, thinking they could just go in and completely wipe out the Iranian government.

And now we're starting to see that Reuters report come out saying that Trump was warned ahead of time that even if they killed Khamenei, Iran would just replace him with someone even more of a hardliner—that the Iranian government as a whole would not fall. And obviously, from everything we've seen, we've seen a lot of protests in recent months. We've also seen a lot of rallies and demonstrations from Iranians on the ground who are standing for their government and their constitution. So this magical idea that you just overthrow the government in a few hours and then parachute in Reza Pahlavi to be the new dictator—it's not working out quite how the Washington architects seemed to think it would.

I'm sure Netanyahu is getting a little frustrated too, because instead, what we have is Iran in this position where not only are they not saying, "Our leadership has completely fallen and you've destroyed us all," but they're pointing to the fact that we have these horrific massacres—like the massacre at the school where dozens of young girls were killed. The fact that the U.S. and Israel chose to carry out the attack today—while, yes, the stock markets are closed here in the U.S.—this is the start of Iran's work week. So these young girls are going to be in school; they're not going to be at home with their families.

The fact that they chose to carry out an attack on a day like today, and that they targeted as many civilians as they did—well, that starts to create blowback for the Trump administration. Because now you get on social media and you see all these horrific images and videos, and you look at them and think, "Oh yeah, that's kind of similar to what we saw in Gaza with those horrific attacks being carried out." And the U.S. and Iran are behind it all. So even though we have some of these Gulf monarchies standing up and acting as though they're really going to confront Iran, I look at this and think, from a public relations standpoint, it looks very, very bad for the U.S. right now.

#Danny

Yeah, well, KJ, I wanted to ask maybe a follow-up on what it means for the Strait of Hormuz to now be a target. Iran has certainly signaled it could close the Strait. Of course, we'll see how that plays out over time. But what does it mean for Iran to already have this in mind? It seems like there was a real plan in place to move quickly in retaliation to this strike, which suggests they knew the strike was coming. So I'm curious what your thoughts on that are.

#Speaker 02

Well, what it is, is it's a near-fatal move. I mean, if I give kind of a combat analogy, the United States was headhunting—trying to hit Iran rapidly and knock it out with a blow to the head. And Iran has the potential to duck that blow. It looks like it's ducked the worst of it, and now it's going to go around and choke it. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most important choke points. As you

say, more than 20 percent of petroleum and natural gas shipments go through the Strait of Hormuz. It's a vital artery for the entire global economic system.

If that gets shut down, we're going to see cascading economic effects across the board, including the cost of oil rising to perhaps 150, 200, maybe even higher per barrel. That's going to have massive ripple effects throughout the economy. And as Iran has said, this is what was going to happen. They gave very clear signals that U.S. bases would be attacked, that Israel would face retaliation, and that the Strait of Hormuz would be shut down. And of course, Ansar Allah has also said they're planning to shut down the Bab el-Mandeb. So we're seeing this cascade in ways I think Trump really didn't anticipate.

I think he was engaging in magical thinking. He was deceived by the Bolton protégés he brought on, and he was also misguided because Iran, up to this point, has been very, very diplomatic. Even when they were attacked, they only engaged in symbolic tit-for-tat responses previously, until the 12-Day War. So that, I think, gave the administration the illusion that this was going to be a cakewalk—that Iran would collapse, or that it would be compliant and obliging. And that certainly isn't the case. Iran is a completely different animal from the weaker states the U.S. has knocked over like bowling pins.

#Danny

Yeah, well, let's take a look at this, Rachel, and get your reaction. You know, as Iran moves on that economic front, we also, of course, have the strikes. What I find interesting—similar to what happened during the 12-Day War back in June—is that rather than the U.S. and Israel having legitimacy in the region to do this, you know, there's all this talk about people dancing in the streets and everyone being so happy about it in Iran. But what about people in the region? For instance, in Bahrain, there have been massive strikes—ongoing missile strikes by Iran hitting the Fifth Fleet base there and other sites in that very tiny country. But look at how people have reacted to them.

#Speaker 04

Musayyara, Musayyara—hit, hit, hit!

#Speaker 05

Hit! Hit!

#Danny

I mean, not necessarily. There are some celebrations going on across the region, similar to what we saw during the 12-Day War in places like Jordan, where people were cheering on Iran's ballistic and hypersonic missiles flying over their heads through air defenses. So, your reaction to this—especially

the legitimacy part—because across the board, it seems like, other than the compliant leaders in the region, there's a lot of anger about this.

#Speaker 03

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, it's been interesting to watch. I know a lot of people look at Iran and say, "Oh, well, it's a paper tiger, it's not really going to respond." Well, today Iran did respond—and it did so in an unprecedented way. I mean, never before have we seen such a wide-ranging attack targeting all these U.S. military bases and having an impact in so many different ways. We went into this knowing the U.S. military was not prepared for it. I know Trump got a little mad earlier this week over the warning, saying, "Look, if you go in and attack Iran, and this goes beyond, you know, four to seven days, we're going to be looking at a stockpile shortage."

And that's not good when we're talking about helping out Ukraine over here and preparing for the eventual dream of war with China that, you know, the hawks in Washington still have. So they want to be careful about how they're approaching Iran. Well, Iran has made it clear that not only are they legitimate, but that they do what they say they're going to do. And one of the things they've been saying with each version of True Promise—one, two, three, four at this point—is that every time they retaliate, it's going to keep getting worse, harsher and harsher, and it's going to come sooner and sooner. So instead of waiting around for two weeks and going, "Is Iran going to respond?"

We saw this response almost immediately. And I don't blame people in the region for getting excited—while, yes, they know there's going to be destruction—getting excited at the fact that Iran is responding, because Iran is the main country standing for the Palestinian people, standing against an ongoing genocide, standing up against the West in a lot of ways. And that doesn't come without weighing its capabilities and its options. I mean, we're talking about a country of 92 million people. And while, yes, there are moments where you look at them and say, "Oh, they're standing up to the U.S.," a war would still have an impact on Iran, just like it would have an impact on the region.

And that's something their government has had to take into account. I think the fact that they're moving so quickly on the Strait of Hormuz is a very telling sign, because that's unprecedented. I mean, I've heard people say for years, "Oh, Iran will never actually close the strait, right? They'll never take that step." Well, they're taking that step right now, and they're making it clear that if they're going to suffer—if dozens of young schoolgirls are going to be murdered—then the rest of the region and the global economy are going to suffer as well.

And so it puts the U.S. and Israel in a very dangerous place, because up until now they've been bargaining on this idea that Iran has no legitimacy, that the government would just fall, that all the hawks in their situation rooms—coming up with different ideas of how this should play out—would know exactly how things would go. Well, they didn't seem to know how it would play out, and we're

not even 24 hours into this. So, I think we still have a long way to go, but I do think Iran is making it very clear that they're going to do what they say they're going to do. And that has got to be terrifying to the U.S. and Israel.

#Danny

Yeah, well, Israel—KJ has been talking a big game. They say they're going to do this for at least four days. I don't know if you heard the fancy names the U.S. and Israel came up with for their operations. I believe it's "Epic Fury" for the U.S. under the Trump administration, and "Roaring Lion" for Israel. Those sound nice and tough and scary, but of course, there have been people who've been killed. What has this moment so far revealed to you about the image of the United States and Israel as these dominant powers that are supposed to never be challenged in any way—especially militarily? That's like the no-go zone, especially for the United States.

#Speaker 02

Well, I think that image has been tarnished more and more. It really started with the 12-day war, when Iran showed that it could hit back—and hit back hard. It was actually Israel that wanted to sue for peace. Now they think they've reloaded and want to go in again and decapitate. And once again, I said that if the U.S. doesn't have an early decapitation, early suppression of enemy air defenses, early destruction of command and control, things get much, much more complicated. I think it shows that the U.S. just doesn't have the power it once had. It doesn't have the kinetic force to push around Iran the way it has with many other smaller countries like Panama, Grenada, Venezuela, and so on. It's a completely different ballgame.

Ninety-plus thousand people, a continent the size of Europe, vast and dispersed military capacities, seventeen different types of missiles—eight of which can very readily reach and destroy Israel. I think it breaks this notion of U.S. impunity and invulnerability. We're still in the early days; things could shift rapidly. War is always unpredictable. But the main thing the U.S. and Israel were counting on—that rapid decapitation—seems to have failed. They've missed their sucker punch, and now things become much, much more difficult and challenging for everybody, including Israel, including the U.S., but certainly also for the Gulf Cooperation states. These are the U.S. vassals that are facilitating the war—in particular, Bahrain, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

All of them are participating—currently soiling their underwear. And we also have to remember that they are weak, illegitimate states that don't even have the proper definition of statehood. Except for Saudi Arabia, the rest are populated 60 to 90 percent by migrants. They're essentially family monarchies that have sold themselves off to the West as imperial vassals and staging grounds for American bases. They have no legitimacy, they don't even have stable populations, and they risk being tremendously destabilized as a result of this. If the war continues and expands, that could change the entire picture of West Asia—the Middle East—if things keep going this way.

#Danny

Yeah, and I'm hearing—you know, I just saw an article in Yahoo Finance, Rachel—that says crude could go up \$10 to \$20 per barrel. That would bring prices to \$70, \$80, even \$90, which would rapidly increase and cause an economic seismic wave, a tidal wave, across the U.S. economy and the world economy as a whole. But any follow-up to what KJ was saying, and the larger consequences of this war?

#Speaker 03

Yeah, I think you made a really good point about the position these Gulf monarchies are in. I noticed that the UAE, in the statement they put out after their American military base was targeted, specifically called out what they referred to as "Iranian escalation." And I'm looking at this and thinking, OK, you can call it that all you want, but the only reason Iran targeted you was because the U.S. and Israel carried out attacks against Iran. And Iran has been warning six ways to Sunday that it would target U.S. bases in the region if it was attacked.

So, cause and effect: Iran carries out this attack, and now suddenly the UAE is pointing the finger at Iran, saying they're the ones responsible for it, right? They're the bad guy here. So it's going to be very interesting to watch in the weeks to come, especially as you have—and I saw that Fox News was already kind of capitalizing on this, saying, "Oh, the Gulf countries are turning on Iran." And I'm going, they were never with Iran to begin with. They were always with the U.S., exactly as KJ noted. They were made to be U.S. vassal states in a lot of ways in the region—made for those military bases, and made for this moment of war against Iran. And Iran's well aware of that, right?

They can see the map. They know all the U.S. military bases around them, and they've been preparing for this war for a long time. Going back to the comment you made about the position crude oil prices are in, I'm wondering how Trump isn't taking that into account, because he just gave his State of the Union address this past Tuesday. One of the big pressures on him has been affordability in the United States, right? Because the American people can bicker back and forth over Democrats and Republicans all day long, but they want to know about gas prices, food prices, housing prices—everything.

A big impact on these gas prices is going to be where oil stands, how trade stands. And if we see the Strait of Hormuz closed for multiple days and this war really explodes, it's going to be devastating for the global economy and therefore devastating for the U.S. economy in a number of ways. I think the Trump administration thought they were going to get in, carry out those decapitation strikes, get out, make it look easy, get Iran to, quote-unquote, capitulate and give them whatever deal they wanted, and then call it a day.

That hasn't happened yet. So as they start to really see what Iran is made of—what it's been preparing for all these years—if we start to see Iran use its hypersonic ballistic weapons, that's going

to be a game changer. The U.S. and Israel are still facing the same stockpile problems they've had this whole time. I wouldn't be surprised to see them do a version of what they did in the 12-day war and say, "Okay, okay, we're done, let's stop, let's have some sort of truce—not necessarily a ceasefire, but an end to fighting. We'll stop shooting you if you stop retaliating against us." If it comes to that, the question will be: what is Iran willing to do?

Because we've also seen a version of this with the current war in Ukraine, where Russia has made it very clear that they don't want to just sign on to any deal offered by the United States and then fight the same war three or four years down the road. They want it to be decided for good now. So the fact that the IRGC came out today and said they're seeking a decisive victory is very telling about the position they're in when they talk about their operation being called the finale of the Al-Aqsa Floods. That tells us they're going all in here, and I don't expect to see them be quick to sign on to whatever deal the U.S. is offering.

And I think that's why we've seen this back and forth with negotiations—where even after all these rounds of indirect talks in Geneva, Iran has made it abundantly clear that they're not going to just sign on to whatever deal the U.S. is trying to sell them. I mean, you had Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, according to reports, trying to get Iran to agree to destroy its own nuclear sites—the same ones Trump has spent the last several months bragging that the U.S. destroyed when it went in and attacked Iran during the 12-day war. I don't know how much more ridiculous it gets, or how much more obvious it gets that the U.S. is not serious about a nuclear deal.

And we also knew that even if Iran signed on to checking every single box the U.S. wanted, they would still find a way to sabotage things down the line. So I think the point we're at was inevitable—it was inevitable we'd get here. And it wasn't surprising at all to see the U.S. and Israel go in guns blazing, acting as though they could carry out a series of attempted decapitation strikes, take out the Iranian leadership, and then call it a day. The question is what they're prepared for after this, because that's a major unknown right now. And if Trump is getting frustrated, like I think he is, it could get bad before—well, it could get bad before it gets worse. Let's just say that much.

#Danny

Yeah, great points, Rachel. Now, I wanted to show some of the damage, KJ. This is damage that's still relatively minor, given the level of weapons Iran is showing they're beginning with. But I'll just pull up some of what's already happened today. One that people have noted is in Qatar—there was a billion-dollar radar destroyed in an Iranian strike on U.S. facilities there. It took out the early warning radar system.

And there you see the before and after. Here's the range of this early warning radar. It's quite—how should I say—valuable; that's why it cost a billion dollars. But then there are reports, of course, of

strikes on Israel which, even with older weapons, are still quite impressive. Here we have some scenes out of Haifa—reports of buildings being destroyed, just massive warning signs to Israel about what’s to come if this continues. So, KJ, any reaction to this?

#Speaker 02

Well, what Iran is doing is what they did before, during the 12-day war. They’re firing their older, slower, less effective missiles as a kind of chaff. They just want to deplete the air defenses. And once that’s depleted—and we know very clearly that the U.S. and Israel have a magazine problem—David’s Sling, Iron Dome, THAAD, Arrow, Patriot, SM-3 and SM-6, all of these systems have limited magazines. The U.S. doesn’t have the industrial capacity to sustain prolonged or protracted defenses against Iran’s attacks, which could potentially overwhelm their systems completely. So I think the first thing to note is that they’ve just gotten started, and they’re just throwing out the junk. Once they sense the magazines are depleted, then they’re going to come in with much, much harder stuff.

And then the other thing to notice is on that radar dome—notice how precise that attack was. I mean, this is one of those key major radar systems that functions like a regional panopticon. It renders the entire region transparent. And this is what the U.S. lives and dies on: it wants that transparency, that transparent battlefield where it can see everything that’s going on. Once you start to blind that, once you start to knock out these different elements of what they refer to as the kill chain, it becomes much, much harder—it becomes much more of an uphill slog. This is the kind of thing that’s not supposed to happen according to U.S. battle doctrine, but they always seem to forget that the adversary has a say. And here, the adversary—Iran—is speaking very clearly and loudly, in forceful ways that the U.S., I believe, has not fully reckoned with.

#Danny

Yeah. Rachel, over to you.

#Speaker 03

Yeah, and I think that as we're watching this play out, it's also really notable—the position that the entire region is in. And I know we've been watching for the last few years, right? Watching the war in Ukraine and the impact that’s had on the multipolar world. Watching as there’s been an all-out genocide targeting the Palestinians, and the impact that’s had. Now we’re moving into, really, this next phase of it with this war. And I know that, in a lot of ways, Trump has looked at war with Iran as one he was going to achieve during this term, right? He brags all the time about assassinating Iranian General Qasem Soleimani during his first term, who, notably, the Trump administration at the time had lured to Iraq with the promise of talks.

And so now, in less than a year, we have the second instance of the U.S. acting as though it wants to make a nuclear deal with Iran—carrying out these negotiations—and then, in the middle of talks,

suddenly coming in and attacking Iran. And I know that the position Iran is in means it has to look at this and decide, okay, where do we go from here? The next time the U.S. comes around and magically says it wants talks, Iran may not be willing to come to the table in the same way, especially given the damage the U.S. has done, has attempted to do, and is likely to still attempt to do against Iran as we get further and further into this situation. And I think the fact that, you know, we had some reports...

I know Axios and the Wall Street Journal were initially reporting earlier today that Trump was going to come out and address the nation. And at the time when I saw that, I thought, okay, did they get Iran's leader? Were they successful with the decapitation strikes? Because that would be a reason for Trump to address the nation. And then suddenly that was called off—maybe the reports weren't accurate. But the point is, that did not happen, at least earlier in the day on Saturday. So I think Trump is in a position right now of trying to figure out how in the world to proceed. But the U.S. needs to wake up and realize the position they've put themselves in. They cannot remotely begin to compete with China when it comes to industrial production.

And so, because of that, they start going after the other pillars of the multipolar world—like, say, Iran or Venezuela, or at least an attempt at Russia. And I think the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro gave the Trump administration almost a false sense of confidence, right? This idea that they could just parachute into a country, kidnap the sitting president, and then act as though they own the government—as though they're the ones in charge now. They looked at Venezuela and said, "Oh yeah, we can do a version of that in Iran. We'll just carry out decapitation strikes instead. Everything will go well. The CIA is giving us the thumbs up on the ground." But up until this point, that is not what has happened. And so I think the U.S. really overplayed its hand here, and it's not looking good for them right now.

#Danny

Yeah, and KJ, it's not as if the U.S. and Israel haven't done damage. They've killed a lot of people in a very short period of time. This is what they're known for. There are a lot of videos and reports about how they did it. They're launching, they're firing from Iraqi airspace. I was seeing Tomahawk missiles being fired—fired over Kurdish airspace from Syrian territory. All kinds of reports about how this has happened. Not the same kind of—well, I don't know if you remember, in the 12-day war, KJ—there was a lot of talk about how Israel owned the airspace after that surprise attack they carried out in June of 2025. That's not the narrative now, actually. It seems like the Trump administration is having a hard time coming up with a narrative about what's going on. And the media is not happy, honestly, with what's happening.

And U.S. allies—of course, this is a longstanding issue. But I wanted to bring this up before getting your reaction, KJ, because I think it's really important. We've seen the Trump administration be very callous, at least in how it presents itself to its European allies. But this is a material—absolutely material—issue that just happened. Italy, right? Italy has forces at the bases the Iranians are hitting

right now. And this has caused a lot of consternation for the Italians, because you have a military base that houses over 300 of their Air Force personnel. There were no orders, no warnings that the U.S. was going to strike, and they had no time to evacuate. Now they're sitting ducks, unable to leave what is a verifiable and easily hittable target for Iran.

#Speaker 02

Yeah, so Italy needs to get out of there as fast as possible—and so should all the other countries. I mean, they're sitting ducks right now. And, you know, this shouldn't come as a surprise. When the mafia don is ready to do what he wants to do, there are no objectives, there are no obstacles—people are expendable. They should have known better. But Italy needs to get out of there, and the same goes for the other countries. I mean, there's chaos. There's a bit of a stress fracture happening between Europe and the United States. It's like the connective tissue has been damaged—a little bit of a political sprain, if you will.

But notice that Germany, France, and the UK—the E3—came out, and their statement was to condemn Iran. You know, absolute and complete nonsense. Condemning Iran—that's what they come out with—against a war of aggression, unprovoked, started under conditions of perfidy. That's the only thing they can come up with. Same thing with Mark Carney—same thing, you know, suggesting that Iran was the aggressor and Israel was defending itself. Absolute nonsense. So you still see the Western ruling imperial colonial class parroting the same narrative, but there are deep fractures inside that system.

And of course, they're not happy—they're not happy with the risks they're being forced to bear. I think the other thing worth noting is that I've heard reports that American troops were moved out of their bases and dispersed into hotels, whereas it seems like the Italians were left as sitting ducks—as, you know, tripwires or targets. And I'm sure the Italian population will be furious, and they should demand the necks of their leaders for putting their compatriots at risk in this completely useless, unnecessary fashion.

#Danny

Yeah, Rachel, over to you.

#Speaker 03

Yeah, when you look at the current situation, I know that's been another major concern as the U.S. has ramped up its military assets in the region. It now has two massive aircraft carriers nearby. And especially as we start to see these retaliatory attacks happening—carried out by Iran, hitting some of the key runways the U.S. would want to use on the bases of its allies—they're going to start really relying on those aircraft carriers. And then the question becomes, do you target the aircraft carriers, right? These are basically floating cities with about 5,000 soldiers on them.

Is that going to be a target that Iran might hit—or, you know, anyone else in the region, anyone else who's part of the axis of resistance that could get on board with that? And are they going to cause major damage to it? So for a lot of these allies, look, at the end of the day, Trump really isn't, as you all have been saying, too fond of his European allies. But they've got to be waking up here and realizing they're on a sinking ship. If it wasn't cutting off Russia—their neighbor on the same continent—cutting off the energy supplies they were getting easily and cheaply from Russia, and then relying on basically whatever the U.S. wanted to give them.

If it wasn't that, then now all of a sudden they're turning around and realizing that the position they're in—with the troops they have in the Middle East—those could be in danger, that their soldiers could die. And Trump isn't going to pick up the phone and call them to tell them exactly what he's doing. No, he's talking to Netanyahu, right? He and Netanyahu are planning this all out, acting like they have everything under control when they really do not at the end of the day.

And so it has to be extremely alarming when you also have pressure on these European allies to cut off their reliance on China, because the U.S. has told them, "You have to be good little vassal states. Here's who you trade with, and here's who you don't." The only problem is that the U.S. doesn't have anywhere near the resources of the countries it's trying to get all these European states to completely cut ties with. So I think for a lot of those countries, they've got to be looking at Iran right now and realizing, "OK, this is why Iran is where it is," because the goal of the U.S. was to cut Iran off from the rest of the world, trying to hurt them economically. I mean, we heard Treasury Secretary Scott Besson bragging about the fact that the U.S. had intentionally manipulated the Iranian currency and that that was directly tied to the protests.

The goal was to make the Iranian people so miserable that they would take to the streets and start protesting in mass numbers. And then all of a sudden, Trump gets on social media and tells the Iranian protesters, "We stand with you." Well, that hasn't worked. I'm starting to get more and more concerned, I'll say, as I watch this play out, because everything the U.S. has tried has failed so far. It makes me worried that they're going to look at ramping up strikes—targeting civilians even more than they already are—or possibly turning to some sort of nuclear option. That's incredibly concerning, because when you have an empire, or in the case of Israel a Zionist state, backed into a corner, they start to get really dangerous.

And so I think that could be a legitimate question we should be asking in the coming weeks, especially if this war drags out—if it goes longer than just the four days that reports here in the U.S. are saying, "Oh, it's only going to be four days." I'm looking at this and thinking, I don't know about that, and I'm worried about what happens if Iran is able to keep inflicting significant damage on Israel—especially if they start pulling out hypersonic ballistic missiles and showing the world what they're capable of, right? Especially if they start targeting satellites up above, since they've mentioned they're going for air, land, sea, and also space. That could put us in a very dire situation, and I'm worried about what the U.S. and Israel might try to do.

#Danny

Yeah, no, great points. And I wanted to turn to Israel, KJ, because I don't know if you've seen the reports. Of course, this is a regime change operation—a regime change war—an attempt to essentially eliminate the entirety of Iran's leadership in hopes that it will be replaced with compliant forces willing to bow down to the U.S. and Israel. But here's a report: Benjamin Netanyahu is saying there are increasing signs that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, is no more.

Israeli media has been circulating this argument all throughout the first day of the war, saying that the supreme leader has been eliminated and that they were successful in this. Now, this is being touted as a huge victory, although I think if it were true, there would be huge repercussions. Iran has not yet confirmed it, and they've actually denied it in many respects. But you also have Netanyahu leaving—he's not staying in Israel. Israel has been hit, as we've shown before here, so far in the first day of this war. But it's obvious they know something much bigger is coming.

And so he is fleeing on his presidential jet to Europe. KJ, maybe we can talk about Israel here, because we heard reports that Israel was going to be the one pushed out in front so it looked better politically for the United States to strike. And then, when we looked at the reports and saw the footage, Israel did strike first—at least according to the initial reports. But then we saw right away that the U.S. Air Force was right there with them, and the media called it a joint strike. So this is fundamentally different, and Israel is definitely behaving differently than during the 12-day war. What's your assessment of this?

#Speaker 02

Well, I think at least we don't have to deal with the pretense that Israel is somehow doing this by itself or that there's a difference of opinion. It's clear they're both working together. They have the same agenda—to control West Asia and to attack and destroy Iran. What's interesting to note, as you point out, is that the Israeli leader has hightailed it out of there. I think that's significant. It shows there's tremendous fear in the Israeli leadership, and they're afraid that what they attempted could now also befall them. Israel is a small country. As I said, there are eight types of missiles that can readily reach Israel.

It has no strategic depth. And I think that initially they did think the great leader, Ali Khamenei, had been knocked out. Clearly, there were pictures of this compound that had been struck with extreme force. But I don't think that's the case. If it were, we would hear more. I think that would also open a Pandora's box that the U.S. and Israel haven't really thought through. I still think the advantage goes to the country with endurance—and that is most certainly Iran, which is fighting for its survival on its home court. I believe we're just seeing the early stages of what could become much, much more dangerous and much, much more bloody.

In particular, Rachel mentioned the aircraft carriers. If there's one lesson we've learned from the Ukraine war, it's that you do not concentrate your forces—you have to disperse them. In this arena of standoff warfare, never concentrate your forces. An aircraft carrier is a concentration of 5,000 troops; it's essentially, potentially, a floating coffin. I think the United States needs to take that into consideration. The other point Rachel made, which I think is very important for us to consider, is this: if they run out of options or face some significant defeat, how will Israel respond?

And I believe they're perfectly capable—the U.S. and Israel both—of moving up the escalation ladder. I was just recently going over the U.S. doctrine for joint nuclear operations from 2005. This was a document that was leaked, and it talked about the reasons or conditions under which nuclear weapons could be used. They said it was for rapid and favorable war termination on U.S. terms, to ensure the success of U.S. and multinational operations, to demonstrate U.S. intent and capability, and to counter potentially overwhelming adversary conventional forces. Okay.

#Danny

A lot of boxes checked.

#Speaker 02

That's a lot of boxes checked, but essentially it means that if the U.S. doesn't like the way things are going, they can use nuclear weapons. Now, they've said, "Oh, we've disavowed this doctrine." But every time you listen to the pundits and the ruling elite talk, they're quoting directly from that paper. So I wouldn't be surprised if there are nuclear preparations underway as a potential backstop.

#Danny

Yeah, no, that's certainly a terrifying proposition, but I think one that has to be taken very seriously and realistically, given the fact that we already know, Rachel, that before Donald Trump authorized this—or however it happened, I mean, we don't know the exact story just yet—but we do know that Trump greenlit this thing. We already knew that the biggest fear from the Pentagon was running out of equipment, running out of ammo, running out of air defenses, running out of everything they've put into place in the region to destroy Iran, fearing that, yeah, this is not an infinite number of resources. We saw that during the 12-day war, but this time, if it's a prolonged and protracted war, there could be other issues—they might not have anything left to fire at Iran.

#Speaker 03

Yeah, and we could see it get to that point. I do want to note, though, because I was looking on social media and seeing that there's been a lot of conversation about the Ayatollah today—this question of whether he's still alive. It's interesting that Reuters is now reporting, essentially, that his

body has been found, that he has died. Interesting that they're putting that out there, right? Because we still haven't received any official confirmation. In fact, what we've heard from the Iranian government has been the exact opposite. So we don't know either way.

But as I'm looking at that, I'm remembering the other Reuters report that said, okay, if you kill Iran's top leader, they're just going to replace him with somebody who's even more of a hardliner, right? Somebody who will continue the Iranian government—or, as they want to call it, the Iranian regime. That really stands out to me because I think that Netanyahu and Trump, in their planning and scheming, thought that all you have to do is take out the Ayatollah, then take out Iran's president, maybe some other military leaders, and that would be it. People would flood the streets, we'd call it a day, and we'd have official regime change. We haven't seen evidence of that.

And so, while we don't have official confirmation on who has or hasn't been assassinated, we do know that Iran still has a functioning government at this point. They still have a working military that's continuing to retaliate. And so, you know, bringing up the conversation about how the U.S. and Israel have overplayed their hand—this idea that you make one move, kill one guy, and then all the other pieces of the puzzle will fall into place—that hasn't proved to be true. So what's likely to happen is that the U.S. and Israel are going to feel like they have to carry out more attacks, that they have to, quote-unquote, "retaliate" for Iran's retaliation, as they put it.

And it's the question of how far they want to get into this—just how dire are weapons stockpiles here in the U.S., and for all of our allies that we're arming around the world, or all of our vassal states more specifically. Because Trump said it—he said it during his State of the Union address, and he said it again in this eight-minute video that he posted at the start of this, overnight, when the U.S. and Israel were attacking Iran. He said that Iran is working on missiles that are threatening the United States—not just military bases, but the U.S. homeland. And so he's tried this kind of last-ditch effort to argue to the world that Iran is a major threat.

Right. Right. Not quite weapons of mass destruction, but a version of saying Iran is threatening the United States. But if you look at Iran and everything they've said up to this point, it's, "We don't want a nuclear weapon. We want to make a deal with you. We want to work things out. We want to have peaceful relations and even trade with the United States, if that's a possibility." They're open to a lot, but they're not just going to cave to U.S. demands. And if the U.S. was successful with any of the top assassinations it was seeking, that's only going to harden the hearts of the Iranian people even more than before. They're not going to want anything to do with the U.S. I wouldn't blame them, in any sense, for chanting "death to America," because the U.S.—that's the country directly threatening their homeland, directly threatening their leaders, killing their children while they're at school.

I mean, the U.S. is taking this terror and bringing it home to the Iranian people. And now they have to respond to that. So, Trump may have thought it would be easy—get in, get out, and it'll be another version of Venezuela. But I think what we're seeing is that this is going to be a quagmire, a

disaster in a lot of ways. And it's going to be what Trump's second term is remembered for. Because once again, for the second time in a year, this guy overplayed his hand—thought, "Oh, we can go in, attack Iran, and do whatever we want." And once again, it hasn't worked out the way he thought it would. He should've learned the first time around. But here we are, once again.

#Danny

Yeah. And KJ, we had reports—report after report—saying that Iran was preparing its entire leadership, especially at the military level, for the event of decapitation. Meaning, they were all ordered and trained to ensure that operations would continue regardless of what happens. And then, when we think about the potential assassination of the Ayatollah, Ayatollah al-Khamenei, we're talking about fury possibly being escalated and spreading all across the region, especially among the Shia population, given that he's considered maybe the second most important figure in the Muslim world. So what do you make of this? It seems like, as Rachel was saying, there's always this expectation that something like this is going to break the back of a country like Iran. But it seems like there were so many warnings before this that that might not be the case, regardless of whether they've been successful at this or not.

#Speaker 02

Yes, we still don't know, and I think it's unlikely. I believe this is an Israeli psyop. They think that by saying this, it will disarm and disillusion people, and also encourage them to rise up. I think that's a complete miscalculation. We'll see what the actual facts are. I've heard that they've lost contact, but that doesn't necessarily mean an individual has been killed, taken out, or assassinated. But I really believe that if they have succeeded in this, they're opening a Pandora's box.

They're literally opening the gates to chaos and catastrophe all over the region. And I think it also ties into this notion that they're looking for a magic bullet—an easy, quick fix that will take care of everything—but it's simply not going to work out that way. I think there have been intelligence assessments saying that even if the Supreme Leader were killed in an operation, it would just result in the IRGC hardliners taking power and coming back with even more hardline stances.

This is perhaps a weak analogy, but in my household, we never use antibacterial soap that's supposed to kill 99.9% of germs, because we know that if you kill 99.9% of the bacteria, you're actually getting rid of all the neutral or beneficial bacteria, and you're just left with the hardest, most fierce elements. The thing is, right now, Iran is in this state where, if it isn't destroyed, it will become stronger—and it is becoming stronger. Each time the U.S. goes after it, it simply becomes more steeled, more capable of resisting. The more you pound iron, the more tempered and strong it becomes. I think that's what's going on right now, and I think the U.S. is completely miscalculating. Certainly, I think Israel is miscalculating on this too.

#Danny

Well, perhaps we can sum up this question about the larger implications. Many people are asking, Rachel, is this the beginning of a World War III scenario? Some guests on the show have argued that this scenario has been unfolding for a long time now. But what do you say to that? Has World War III just begun, now that we see how big the ramifications and implications are of this criminal U.S.-Israeli war of aggression on Iran?

#Speaker 03

Yeah, I'm one of those who thinks we've been in World War III for a little while now. But it does bring up the question of how Russia and China, specifically, are going to respond. Because at the end of the day, if they lose Iran, that's going to be incredibly damaging for both of them. And obviously, Iran has its capabilities, right? We've only just begun to see what Iran can do, and they've said they have a lot of different surprises in store. But it also raises a question for countries like Russia and China, which have tried to take a more hands-off approach.

Obviously, they have a number of things they're dealing with in their own backyards, and they have issues that the U.S. has intentionally brought. But they're going to have to decide how to respond and what they'll be able to do for Iran, because I think the future of the multipolar world is at stake here. Right? This question of, are we going to stand up to the U.S. empire, and what is that going to look like? Well, right now, Iran is doing everything it possibly can to stand up to the U.S., to stand up in the region, to make it clear what's going on.

I think it's going to be a very decisive moment for the multipolar world, in the same way the war in Ukraine has been a decisive moment for Russia and for how it's handled the U.S.—the U.S. empire being just a complete and total bully. Now we're in a position where we look at Iran, we look at how they're standing up, and it's the question of who's going to stand up with them? Who's going to tell the U.S. that this is not okay, that you cannot continue this way? And who's going to put their money where their mouth is at the end of the day? Because for decades now, the U.S. has been the empire. If they want to overthrow a government, they do it.

If they want to invade a country, they do it. What they say goes, and no one has really been able to stand up to them. But Iran has resisted. Iran has withstood an incredible amount of pressure, and they're still resisting right now. I think there's something to be said for the Iranian people, who have been through hell and back, who, at this very moment, are losing friends and family members because of these horrific attacks that the U.S. and Israel are carrying out. They are paying the price, and they are standing truly for the entire world, up against this massive bully that has targeted them for far too long. Yeah, KJ, same question to you.

#Speaker 02

Yeah, exactly. You know, I think we can see the machinations and the intent of the Epstein class that thinks nothing of wiping out 85 schoolchildren—kids just going to school dutifully. You can see

the blood on their torn-up backpacks. This is what we're up against. There's this fundamental belief, this legitimization crisis happening for the imperial West. They're afraid their power is waning, and they're resorting to extreme, overt, and naked violence. They're no longer bothering to hide it. We're no longer even given the courtesy of being lied to anymore. They just go in and do what they will. The weak suffer what they must; the strong do what they will. But I do want to point out that currently, the U.S. has not brought in any meaningful concentration of ground troops.

And this is because it knows it has no ground game. Ultimately, without a ground game—without ground troops—you do not defeat an enemy. Of course, you can damage, you can even destroy countries, but you cannot defeat an adversary. The fact that they don't have ground troops, the fact that they don't have the kind of preparation we saw, for example, with Iraq and Afghanistan, shows that even as the U.S. retaliates and acts out with tremendous violence and brutality, it also understands there are certain hard material limits to what it's capable of. At the same time, you can be quite sure that both Russia and China are using what's happening right now as a laboratory for how they'll continue to challenge the U.S. as the war comes closer and closer to their capitals as well.

So I think it's not a lost game. I think it's important. I think the most important thing right now is for people in the Global North to restrain their governments, to call them out, to prevent the U.S. from continuing to escalate and to come back to its senses. Iran has never been a threat to the United States. It does not have nukes. It has no intention of having nukes. It was not posing any danger to the United States. This is a completely unprovoked, unwarranted war of aggression for imperial design. And we need to be out there in the streets, on the phone lines, in every conceivable way and capacity, trying to prevent this from escalating any further. The U.S. needs to stop right now.

#Danny

Yeah, no, I think that's a great point. We can begin to close here. I'll just say this: whatever one thinks about Iran—its leadership, its politics, whatever—if it's true that the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been killed, he's 86 years old, and Iranians will likely see him as someone who died defending his country. He didn't leave the country. It was obvious that this attack was likely known about beforehand, though whether they had enough time to react to it as fully as they would have wanted is another question. But that begs the question: how do Americans, people in the United States, Westerners, view themselves vis-à-vis this war? Not just as something that's unpopular, but, you know, something that we're either involved in or spectators of—or what? There's a big question as to how people should really approach this moving forward. Any final comments, Rachel and KJ, that you want to make before we close out here?

#Speaker 03

Yeah, I'll just throw in there really quick that, you know, going back to the so-called war on terror, you think of how hard the U.S. government and the U.S. media worked to sell this idea of weapons of mass destruction—to sell this idea that the American people, in the aftermath of 9/11, were going

to come under attack again. They sold the war on Iraq that way. When we look at this war on Iran, the U.S. government hasn't even really tried. I mean, Trump's points—you can go through and fact-check every single one of them—when it comes to Iran wanting a nuclear weapon, or the danger that Iran poses to the United States, or even the danger that Iran poses to U.S. troops in the region, who the U.S. has intentionally put around Iran.

And so it's very telling to me—and it should be insulting to the American people—that their government is making it clear they don't even care if people are propagandized into the next phase of World War III. Trump is going in there anyway. They did vote for Donald Trump, hoping he was going to be the peace president, that this so-called "era of peace" was ever going to mean something, right? The idea that Trump was going to end any of the wars, or even make good on this long list of wars he claims he's solved—the people who genuinely believed in that are the ones who especially need to start putting pressure on the Trump administration, on Republicans, and on Democrats as well. Because at the end of the day, as we saw at his State of the Union address, they weren't too happy with Trump in a lot of ways, but they were all in favor of an attack on Iran. And that is very telling—or at least it should be—for the American people.

#Danny

They were clapping as he was promoting the WMD lies that he repeated again in his eight-minute statement from an undisclosed location. KJ, any final thoughts?

#Speaker 02

Yes, I'm absolutely, you know, on the same page as Rachel. I agree with her 100%. You know, war will not solve any of the problems we're facing, which are structural. They have to do with the contradictions of the system itself. And everybody who was told that a vote for Trump is a vote to end wars should understand now, if anything, that they were lied to. So what we need to do is take action—not only to stop the wars, but to punish and hold accountable the liars and the warmongers. That's our task right now.

#Danny

Yeah, I really agree with both of you. I really hope that this moment can demonstrate that, when it comes to U.S. empire and imperialism, we see that the bigger the carrot, the harder the stick. Every time we go through this—whether it's a figure like Donald Trump, twice, or Obama once—we can name them over and over again. The bigger the lie, the worse their record and their service to empire end up being, largely because there are so many things this is supposed to serve that ultimately, as we see now, backfire hard. But it was great to be on with both of you. I want to be sure to thank everyone who gave a super chat and who became a member today as well.

I want to point everyone to Rachel's YouTube channel in the video description. That's where you can subscribe and follow her work. She does great work—daily work, I think, right, Rachel? I feel like you are. Just about, yeah—just about daily. And not to mention, you've been very gracious with your platform and space for both of us, so I just want to say thank you for all the work that you do. And KJ, of course, to you too, for giving your time here to talk about this. We'll have to keep up with the situation—it's likely going to go on for a while. Anything you want to say to the audience before we head out, you guys?

#Speaker 02

It's time to hit the streets. It's time to hit the phones. It's time to take action. It's time to take everything you have and stop the war machine.

#Danny

Yes. Oh, sorry, Rachel—please, go ahead.

#Speaker 03

Oh, I was just going to say what KJ said. I couldn't have said it any better.

#Danny

Well, without further ado, everybody, as you go listen to both Rachel and KJ, be sure to hit the like button before you go, because that helps boost their voices so more people can hear them too. Go to the description to find Rachel's work and all the places to support this channel. I'll be back probably daily—likely, I think, tomorrow morning. I'll let you know what's going on with that very soon, as we do daily updates here on this podcast. What could be—and what already is, actually, I shouldn't even say "could be"—a monumental moment in history with this criminal war of aggression on Iran by the United States and Israel. All right, everybody. Salute. Take care. Bye-bye.