

Scott Ritter: Trump Calls Putin for Iran War Off-Ramp

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter discusses the Trump-Putin phone call as the US needs an off-ramp in its war against Iran. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We're joined today by Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector, a U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer, and also an author. Thank you for coming on. Trump has called Putin. They had this conversation, I assume, about ending the Iran war and also the Ukraine war, although I suspect the emphasis was on the former. Yeah. The Russians referred to this call as "frank." They did not use the word "friendly." So I was wondering, what do you read into all of this? What do you suspect they discussed?

#Scott Ritter

Well, there's a lot of speculation around that one. I think we do know it was Trump who initiated the call, so this was an American-initiated call. We also know that Russia has, to the dismay of some and the surprise of others, kept the door open for diplomacy with the United States, despite the U.S. being less than a perfect diplomatic partner. In particular, they've kept the invitation open for Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to continue to participate, and even take a lead, in diplomacy. And again, given their track record with Iran, one would think that would have been a disqualifying factor. But the reason I bring this up is that Russia isn't doing anything precipitous to close the diplomatic door—and you have to ask yourself, why would they? I mean, there are some purists out there.

I count myself among those who, in times of passion, sometimes forget that there is an art to diplomacy. And since war is an extension of politics by other means, diplomacy is often the sounder path to take than confrontation. But, you know, we're dealing with a time when Russia—when Vladimir Putin—was the target of an assassination attempt using 91 drones, directed by CIA intelligence, while the president was engaged in a conversation. That was on December 28th. Great Britain has attacked Votkinsk using a British-made Storm Shadow missile—sorry, a Flamingo missile attack—using Ukraine as a proxy. But it was designed and targeted by Great Britain.

And now seven Storm Shadow missiles have hit a strategic industrial facility in the city of Bryansk. You know, normally these are red lines, and yet the Russians leave the door of diplomacy open. The question is, why? I think the answer is that Russia is playing a very strategic game on multiple fronts, and they've successfully avoided falling into the military trap. To give you an example—because logic dictates, and Sergey Karaganov has articulated this—that if England strikes Russia, Russia strikes England. And we know there's a facility in a British town that produces Storm Shadows, and it has literally become a legally justifiable target.

Russia would have every right under international law to put an airstrike on that facility and end its existence. Same thing with Flamingo. We know Flamingo is a British design—the British all but admitted it when they unveiled it at their Abu Dhabi Arms Expo under the flag of a British company. You know, Russia would have every right to take out that headquarters and any facilities associated with it. So why haven't they? Keir Starmer is in the process of political freefall. If you attack the UK, you've suddenly made Keir Starmer a wartime leader, and you create the potential for his political revival. So, you know, Russia has taken seven Storm Shadows and a Flamingo. Some damage has been done, but the strategic picture is that the British government is collapsing, and Russia only has to wait and do nothing.

So, yeah. Sometimes military action isn't the—well, with the United States, one of Russia's strategic goals and objectives is the lifting of economic sanctions. And here, by doing nothing, Russia had all the oil sanctions lifted. I mean, I'm not an economist, but I can imagine that if you were selling Eurograde crude at \$23 a barrel, discounted, and you're now able to sell it at \$80 on the open market, that \$53-a-barrel profit helps balance a budget, helps pay for a war. It helps with any number of things—cash shortages, the whole thing. This is good. And Russia didn't have to do anything except keep the door of diplomacy open, pick up a phone call, answer the phone call, and have a frank discussion.

I think the Russians had a very frank discussion about world energy. The president has suddenly become very well informed about Russia's potential to deliver oil and gas into a market now facing a critical shortage because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. The president has been educated about what will happen to the American economy if a balance isn't found in the global energy supply market. Russia doesn't need to tell the president about the political consequences of a failed economy—the president understands that. So I think the Russians have kept the door open because it plays to their advantage. A Russian overreaction.

For instance, assassinating Zelensky—which would be a very crowd-pleasing thing to do in Russia. The man is a dog, a criminal, a Nazi. He's committed horrific crimes. He's now attacking Russian civilians, and has been. It would be a very pleasing thing to do. But strategically, your job is to remove Ukraine from the side of Europe and the United States, to eliminate Ukrainian nationalism, and to make Ukraine a neutral party. Do you do this by carrying out actions that would inflame Ukrainian nationalism? Zelensky right now is identified as one of the worst leaders possible for Ukraine. The longer Zelensky rules Ukraine, the better off it is for Russia.

They gain everything—the collapse of confidence in the Ukrainian government, and so on. We now see a political three-way death match between Zelensky, Zaluzhny, and Budanov. A Russian targeting of Bankova would literally turn Zelensky into what Russia doesn't want him to be: a wartime leader with credibility. It would give him justification for everything he's done. So for the Russians, doing nothing is actually the best course of action—to let Ukraine devolve, to let the United Kingdom devolve. Now, in the context of Iran, for Russia not to take that phone call removes them from the decision-making cycle in the United States. But by taking that phone call, Russia is able to make its voice heard.

And the president is desperate. By taking this phone call, Russia has set up the potential for an additional call—maybe even a face-to-face meeting with Kirchner and Witkoff. But that meeting would happen on terms far more influenced by Russian goals and objectives, because it's the United States that now desperately needs Russian assistance to achieve an outcome that's politically useful to the American president. You know, I think you might see Russia being willing to put pressure on Iran to bring about conflict termination, or to avoid certain actions, in exchange for the United States easing some of its demands regarding Ukraine.

I think you can see the United States is literally running away from Ukraine as fast as possible. Russia wants to encourage that, which is why it does nothing except leave the door open for it. So I think what you saw was a very frank conversation—not one that put Trump on the defensive, but one that educated him about the reality he's facing and the role Russia could play. But, you know, it also let the president know there are conditions that have to be met. Russia's saying, "We want to negotiate an end to this war," but they're not going to accept Ukrainian terms. And the United States needs to stop backing those terms.

And I think you can see Russia and the United States come to an agreement that more closely resembles Alaska—but let's call it "Alaska Modified." Because now, since the United States reneged on Alaska, they can't just throw it back on the table. When you throw it back on the table, it now has strings attached. And the Russians should start calling in those strings. For instance, the idea of freezing the line of contact in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia might mean that, over time, the Ukrainians could be called upon to give up those territories as well. You know, we get into buffer zones. So, again, I don't know the details of the Russian position—they haven't been made public.

But I think, you know, Russia is in a better position to admit, to force, to compel the United States to stick to Alaska Plus—meaning Alaska Plus reflects the current reality—and to bring about an end to this conflict. I think the United States isn't in much of a negotiating position. Time is not on their side, because this conflict with Iran is going south quickly, and they need Russia. They need Russia to get involved in the energy market, and they need Russia's help with bringing an end to this conflict. And again, Russia can help provide some political cover for the president. Imagine if the president said he was able to get a Ukrainian peace deal and an Iranian peace deal on the same day.

Man, suddenly that Nobel Peace Prize is looking pretty good around his neck. I mean, he's the man—because he's the peace president. And Russia is more than happy to play that game. You know, trust me, the Russians know better than anybody that President Trump is the least qualified person in the world for a Nobel Peace Prize. But since the Nobel Peace Prize has already been politically compromised, why not just give it to a politically compromised person? So I think the Russians—they know how to play Trump. And I think this phone call is all about playing Trump.

#Glenn

But at the same time, it seems that the cost of doing nothing is that Russia's deterrence keeps weakening. The fact that the British would dare to do this kind of thing—strike inside Russia. The fact that people like Chancellor Merz can sit in Munich at the security conference and brag about how he's imposed all these casualties on Russia. It just—well, I got the impression from the decapitation strike against Iran that this had made the Russians rethink a bit what was done in December against Russia in Valdai. Do you see this pressure on Putin to essentially do what Iran has done—that is, tell anyone who attacks Iran or assists in any way, allows the use of bases or its airspace, that everyone will be struck? I mean, I would expect in the future that a lot of the Gulf nations will be very cautious about allowing their territories to be used again. If they can't, well, this is the consequence. Well, again, um...

#Scott Ritter

Only Russia can make that call. But I would say that if I were Naryshkin advising the president, I'd say Starmer is history—Keir Starmer is toast. And the continued devolution of the British political system is to the benefit of Russia. When Starmer goes, there will be a political vacuum and infighting, and you're going to see Britain continue to collapse of its own volition. You know, the case can be made for patience. I mean, what has Britain done besides giving European politicians bragging rights? It's meaningless.

Merz bragging about what he did to Russia doesn't change the strategic equation—that the German economy is trash and is going to get trashed even further now because of a looming economic crisis brought on by an energy shortage. You know, so, you know, Merz's domestic political status is—let him brag. Who cares? It's words. It's nothing. And Starmer, if he wants to sit there and talk behind the scenes about how England is enabling Ukraine to strike strategic targets—in the short term, yes, it would be pleasing. I mean, I think I could say that I speak for a lot of Russians who would love to see British factories go up in smoke and love to see rationing grind down German factories.

And, you know, it would feel good for a moment, but is the goal to end this war or to expand it? Because right now the European Union is in trouble. They don't know how they're going to fund the continuation of this conflict. Germany, again, is a collapsing economy, with its political fortunes

collapsing. Starmer's on the way out, Macron's in crisis. You know, sometimes when the enemy is doing what you want them to do, just let them keep doing it and take the peripheral hits. There will have to be a balancing act because this is not sustainable.

But I think there are ways the Russians could strike targets inside Ukraine without empowering Zelenskyy. You know, to focus more on the bases in western Ukraine where these missiles came from. I think you might see the Russians act more liberally to take out those air bases where the aircraft that fired the Storm Shadows are located. To strike targets that, you know, we know the British have built certain refurbishment facilities—I believe there are some Flamingo assembly facilities—again, in western Ukraine, maybe perilously close to the Polish border. These are targets that need to be taken out, and taken out decisively. There has been some political risk associated with hitting these targets, but I think it's time to eliminate that political risk.

So that's where I think the Russians could, um, you know, go to flex their muscle, but let Europe continue to commit suicide. I mean, they're weaving the rope, they've put it around their neck. My God, don't stop them from getting on the stool and kicking it out from underneath themselves. That would be my advice to the Russian president: you know, we're winning, so let's keep on track. Don't allow ourselves to be deflected off course because the British landed a punch. I mean, you're in a fifteen-round boxing match—round nine, the British hit you, got a nice kidney shot.

Okay. Don't change your plan. Get back to the game. You're wearing them down, and you're going to knock them out in round 14 or 15. But if you change now because you got mad and start, you know, aggressively punching, you might be playing into their game plan. So I think Russia sticks to the script. This oil thing—the lifting of oil sanctions—I think is just a gift from God. Again, I'm not an economist, but I can't imagine this doesn't solve a lot of pressing economic problems for Vladimir Putin. No budget issues. You keep making a \$57 profit margin over what you were making.

You know, who knows how far this goes? If this war keeps going, Russia right now has the ability to influence how long the Strait remains closed. So Russia's in the driver's seat. The United States went to Russia for a solution—that's the thing. Russia didn't go to the United States; the United States went to Russia. So the U.S. is looking for Russia to do something, which means Russia's in control here. I don't think this is a sign of weakness on Russia's part; it's actually a sign of their diplomatic strength.

#Glenn

Well, I assume that in these talks, Trump was looking at to what extent Putin could help bring an end to this war—in other words, offer some kind of off-ramp, even if that meant concessions from the Iranians, which probably aren't forthcoming. But we also see in this report—at least in the Washington Post—suggestions that Trump's advisor is arguing we have to end this because we're not winning. And in the Israeli media, there are now suggestions that many Israeli leaders are also worried that Iran isn't collapsing and isn't going to capitulate. So where is this all going? I guess my

question is twofold: is there an off-ramp to this—in Iran, that is—and if not, what will Trump do? Just inflict destruction? Or what's the war plan now that regime change isn't happening?

#Scott Ritter

The only off-ramp is one that Iran agrees to. The United States and Israel have no vote on this. They started something, and they're no longer in control. This is going to go on as long as Iran wants it to. That's just the reality. What can Trump do? I mean, we had General Kane come out and outline his plan. Basically, he said we're having great success against the Iranian missiles. Last night proved that to be a straight-up lie. We've sunk the Iranian Navy—who cares? The Strait of Hormuz is still closed, and you're not going to open it, because it was never about the Iranian Navy. And now you're going to expand your target set to strike strategic industrial targets inside Iran.

They're all empty. If you think that on day twelve Iran still has high-value industrial equipment stored in known strategic industrial facilities, please pass that marijuana cigarette, because it must be pretty damn good. And I want some of it—even though I don't smoke marijuana. I might if it's that good. If it lets you hallucinate that well, I'll do it, because those sites are empty. There's no strategically important equipment in any known facility anymore. It's all been moved, it's all been evacuated. So we'll just be bombing empty buildings. All Trump has is an expansion of the empty-building bombing campaign, which makes us feel good because we get a lot of war porn.

We get to watch things blow up and go "ooh, ah," and the mouth-breathers get to breathe heavily and post stupid stuff on X and other social media outlets. But Iran just keeps winning. At some point, it's going to become clear to the United States that it doesn't dictate the end of this war—Iran does. And therefore, they need to talk to people who have connections to Iran. The United States has none. Iraq won't pick up the phone and talk to Witkoff. That means Russia now becomes the intellectual center. Russia gets to talk to the Iranians and play the role of mediator, and that's where Russia's value comes into play.

#Glenn

Yeah, I saw Trump put up a tweet—something along the lines of "we hit 5,500 targets," which isn't much of a strategy, just blowing things up. As you said, it starts to look childish. You'd want to see what the objective is and how these targets actually achieve that objective. But you mentioned the inability to open Hormuz. Trump has argued that the goal is to open the Strait of Hormuz—I guess to get the energy flowing again. He also said that if the Iranians dare to close it, or keep it closed, he'll hit them twenty times as hard. And Macron has now suggested that the French will also, you know, have a defensive mission in the Strait of Hormuz to open it up. To what extent is such a military option actually possible, though?

#Scott Ritter

Ooh la la, the French getting involved—that's a game changer. I mean, my God, Macron, the military genius that he is. I can't imagine, you know, the... I mean, the French—that changes everything. I think Iran's going to surrender tomorrow. It's stupidity. Look, there's a way to get the Strait of Hormuz open: brute force. You come in and seize Karg Island, seize all the islands—Qeshm Island—and project power ashore. You seize the shoreline on the Iranian side of the Strait of Hormuz. You go in with, you know, 80,000 Marines, seize and hold that territory, and you can extend an air bridge over it, and the Iranians couldn't touch it.

You can do that, but it'll cost you—it'll be very heavy. And we don't have the resources available right now, so it's a time-intensive thing. Still, once you get there, you'll be vulnerable to Iranian ballistic missiles. You might not have Iranians pushing you with troops, because with your air supremacy you'd be able to hold back any concerted ground effort there, and you should be able to push back against most local threats. But we don't have a solution to ballistic missiles, and we don't have a solution to drones. So we'd just be parking ourselves on Iranian territory, trying to force ships through.

The Iranians will still, on occasion, target a ship, and they'll just start pounding our forces. Logistics becomes a problem. You put 80,000 guys ashore in Iran—you've got to support them, you've got to sustain them. You need port facilities, and those port facilities will be under duress. So again, we just don't have the Marines to do that. We'd have to redirect a lot of Marine manpower and bring in amphibious shipping that would be vulnerable. And it would take months to do this, and meanwhile, the international economy would collapse well before that.

So this is just fanciful thinking on the part of the United States and on the part of France—that they have a vote. The U.S. has always bragged that they could open up the Strait of Hormuz any time they wanted to, and the Iranians have always said that's a pipe dream. So far, it appears that it's a pipe dream that Iran can shut this thing down. There's not a damn thing the United States can do to open it up, and the inclusion of France in the war mix, I think, only weakens the case, because France has zero meaningful military capacity. French involvement with the United States would just complicate planning.

So again, game, set, match—Iran. They've planned this thing out better than we have. The fact that we're sitting here talking about this on day twelve means we didn't consider it on day one, which means we're making it up as we go along. The Iranians are on their war plan. They're sticking to their war plan. They've thought this thing through. John Boyd, a famous colonel, talks about getting inside the enemy's decision-making cycle. He talks about the OODA loop—Observe, Orient, Decide, Act. I'm sure you're familiar with it. Well, the Iranians are inside the American decision-making cycle. We've changed our war plan five or six times.

They, on the other hand, haven't changed theirs at all. They're sticking to it. We're reacting to them. They're driving; they're in the driver's seat. They're the ones initiating the action. We're reacting. When you're reacting, you're losing. You need to be in charge—you need to be the one precipitating

action, getting the enemy to react. The Iranians are in charge. We're reacting to them. We're going to lose. If we're talking about putting ground troops into the theater to open up the Strait of Hormuz, it means we hadn't considered that as an option early on, which means we've done zero logistical planning for it. So no, it's just not going to happen anytime soon.

#Glenn

So what are the war plans going forward from here? What cards can the U.S. play? Because it looked as if, in the absence of its own ground troops, it could get the Kurds armed. Then there were some reports that the CIA had already done this, but now reports from the Kurds suggest they're not going to. Azerbaijan looked like it was going to be pulled in, but instead of retaliating against what was allegedly an Iranian drone, they're now sending humanitarian aid instead. And, you know, Lindsey Graham threatened Saudi Arabia with consequences unless they joined the fight, because they don't want to fight Iran directly either. I guess a lot of the infrastructure is quite vulnerable. So... what does this mean? I guess, what cards are there to play? You know, how short is the U.S. on ammunition here?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, we have plenty of, you know, dumb bombs. We have some kits that can be attached to them, so we could drop laser-guided munitions. But, you know, we've been supplying Israel—how do you think Israel leveled Gaza? Yeah. So there's a finite number of these sets. We're running out of standoff precision missiles, which means future strikes would require aircraft to actually penetrate Iranian airspace. Iran has held back on its air defense plans; they've retained a significant portion of it.

And if we start penetrating their air defenses, I think you're going to start seeing air defense ambushes, and we'll start losing aircraft. That's going to be problematic, because then we have to rescue pilots, which means sending in combat search-and-rescue teams—and they could go down too. We'd get a "Black Hawk Down," Persian-style. It's just a bad look all around. We are running out of precision standoff weapons. They're very expensive, and, again, anyone who knows anything would have said, "We don't have enough—we're going to run out of cruise missiles."

We fired enough to kill a bunch of children, but we haven't retained enough to sustain this conflict. So the next steps are just to blow up more things. I mean, that's what General Kane said—that the only option we have is to blow up more things. That's all President Trump could threaten to do: blow up more things. We don't even know what they're blowing up, though. Again, if we showed so much confusion in our initial wave of the attack—where we should have had the best intelligence possible—and yet, out of four places targeted in the Manab Naval Facility, two were empty warehouses, one was a hospital, and one was a school. Fifty percent of our targets were illegal under the law of war.

It makes you wonder what percentage of the targets we're striking today are illegal. We'll never know, because Pete Hegseth shut down the units responsible for screening targets to make sure they weren't civilian in nature. But now, as we become more and more desperate, we're just going to start expanding the target deck. You know, if we've already bombed 5,000 targets and now Trump says we're going to bomb more—where are they going to come from? What targets are they? Who's making these targets? Who's making the decisions? Is this AI-driven? How many homes are we going to strike? How many schools are we going to strike? How many hospitals are we going to strike?

How many mosques are we going to strike? And the answer is a lot, because this has now become literally a war of cultural genocide. You know, that's what the United States will be. We're not going to win. The Iranians are not going to blink. I mean, I'm sure you've studied—at least peripherally—the strategic air campaign during the Second World War against Germany. And you're aware of the reality that it didn't achieve the strategic results they wanted. German production actually went up, became more efficient, and the will of the German people to resist wasn't broken by the strategic air campaign. So what we're proposing is basically to increase the scope and scale of a strategic air campaign that history shows doesn't work, doesn't achieve the outcomes you want.

You know, there's a reason why Azerbaijan backed off. This war was sold as a regime-change war, even though now Trump says it's not. Well, it's not because we can't—but we tried. And, you know, the idea was, if you kill Ali Khamenei and you have people in the streets shouting "death to the Ayatollahs," the Kurds might be more inclined to say, "OK, we're in." The Azeris might say, "Yeah, Zangezur's our corridor. It's looking pretty good right now. Let's jump in on this one." But when you kill the supreme leader and the end result is a unified Iran screaming for revenge, the last thing you want to do is get your name on that revenge list. And the Kurds suddenly woke up and went, "Well, we're not doing that." And the Azeris went, "Yeah, we're not doing it either."

The Saudis, they're not doing it. Lindsey Graham can talk till he's pink in the face. But, you know, he may look cute to his—never mind, I'm not going there. I don't like Lindsey Graham, but there's no reason to get ad hominem on him. Still, this is a man who talks tough, but there's nothing tough about him. He's a pancake. He's a perfume princess. He's nothing. He's a senator who, for whatever reason, people listen to, but hopefully he's being disgraced right now. And I think he's embarrassed. I think he's embarrassed by the fact that he sold a war to Trump, and that war is going bad, and his political capital is going out the window. And he's coming up on a contentious election that he may very well lose, which would be the greatest thing South Carolina has ever done.

Um, so he's become more and more desperate, threatening Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia doesn't care about his threats. The biggest consequence for Saudi Arabia would be the destruction of its energy production capability, which is guaranteed if they jump in with both feet into this war against Iran. The United States has proven that it can't defeat Iran. Iran has proven that it can continue to inflict destruction beyond its borders, even after absorbing 5,000 bombs dropped on its territory. So it

doesn't matter what Lindsey Graham says. He's irrelevant. He's simply fodder for the mainstream media to sell a war that's becoming increasingly impossible to sell.

#Glenn

It does look like, strategically, they got a bit lost after the original regime-change operation failed. And of course, the whole premise that Trump would be allowed to choose the next leader shows a certain amount of detachment from what they think Iran is and who the Iranian people are. Just as a last question—what do you think are the wider implications of this? Because this is, of course, not just a war between Israel and the U.S. on one side and Iran on the other. This will have wider, I guess, global ramifications. What does this mean for the future of Israel, nuclear proliferation, the Abraham Accords, and the partnership between Russia and Iran? Sorry, a lot of questions packed in there, but more generally—what do you think are the wider consequences of this war? Not just the war happening, but the fact that it's going south as well.

#Scott Ritter

I think this will be a huge strategic defeat for the United States. Trump will try to mitigate that by creating political cover at home. But globally—look at what's already happened. We've stripped air defense out of South Korea, and we've proven that our ballistic missile defense shield over Asia doesn't work. If we were trying to intimidate the Chinese—remember, the National Security Strategy document of the Trump administration talks about conventional military overmatch against China in the Pacific—we've just proven that we're woefully inadequate. If you want to see a nation that has more missiles than Iran, look at China. Taiwan has to be looking at this, saying, "We're screwed. It's over if China ever decides to unleash its ballistic missile fury on us."

So we know that the ballistic missile defense won't work. We know they'll destroy everything. We know the United States can't come to our assistance. So it's over. South Korea and Japan have to be reconsidering their tripartite nuclear deal with the United States, because the U.S. has been exposed as a toothless tiger. Not only that, we're stripping away their defenses. So this is bad for the United States all around, strategically. We're not going to recover militarily from this, even though we're not suffering significant material loss in terms of aircraft or munitions. You know, what this is going to do to American defense priorities—rebuilding ammunition, for example—because once you have no ammunition, your military is useless. And so, who's going to step in and take advantage of this?

I think that, you know, we're going to have to leverage Ukraine away—meaning that Russia is going to get what it wants in Ukraine. I think China is going to get what it wants in Taiwan. I think China is going to get what it wants in the South China Sea. I think India is going to realize the United States is not the partner it should be, and India will jump in even further with BRICS. And I think Iran will emerge as a regional power. The United States will be evicted from the Middle East. Israel—this is

the one place where I think Putin's intervention could come into play, because Putin has said straight up that Israel, because of its heavy Russian-Ukrainian population, is an extension of Russia. So Putin's not going to let Iran sit there and continue this war to the point where they depopulate Israel.

I'm not talking about killing Israelis. I'm talking about making Israel unlivable so people start to flee. I think Israel will still exist, but now pressure can be brought on its nuclear program. I don't think Israel gets to stand around as a unilateral defier of nuclear proliferation. Either the entire world goes nuclear, or Israel is going to have to be compelled to talk about this. And maybe that's the leverage Russia could use, too, with the Iranian program—meaning to finally dispose of those 450 kilograms of 60 percent enriched uranium. Iran's not going to give that up for free now. The United States has lost all negotiating posture and can't be trusted.

But Russia might be able to get Iran to put that on the table and reach a deal that closes the door to any breakout potential, in exchange for Israel putting its nuclear program on the table as well. So, you know, there are a lot of possibilities here. But to do that, this war is going to have to continue a little longer. The United States is going to have to feel real economic pain—that's the only way it'll make some of the decisions that need to be made. And then, you know, the president—again, I think the president, being the con artist he is—believes he can sell it as, "I'm the man who brought peace to the Middle East and peace to Ukraine and Russia."

"I'm the guy who did it. Me, Donald Trump. I'm the best thing in the world. This never would have happened if I hadn't gone to war with Iran. This war with Iran—you know, we achieved lasting peace. Look, we brought stability to the Middle East. There's no need for American troops there anymore. We brought peace. We can bring them home. I told you I'd bring my troops home. This is a great victory. And I think he'll try to sell it that way. And he may succeed, because the American public has shown itself to be very ignorant and vulnerable to this kind of nonsense coming from Washington, D.C."

#Glenn

Sorry, just one last question. Did it surprise you that Lavrov was essentially scolding the Gulf nations? Many had assumed that after Syria, the Russians would try to take a more balanced approach to the Middle East. His engagement in Syria alienated many of the Gulf states, but here we see Lavrov making it very clear that Russia is not a neutral actor in this conflict—essentially scolding the Gulf states for participating in the attack on Iran and then coming to Russia, trying to get them to put pressure on Iran. Did that come as a surprise?

#Scott Ritter

No, because, um, as a longtime student of Russia, I'd say Russia acts based on the diplomatic foundation that exists. Parse away Russia's involvement in Syria and look at what Russia's obligations were—it wasn't black and white. Russia wasn't obligated to get involved; it was there to

achieve stability. Russia made recommendations to the Assad regime that were ignored. A situation developed, and Russia didn't have the authority to expand that conflict, especially once Assad started to weaken Russia's position. So people, I think, put a lot of weight on it, but Russia is an actor—a global actor—that requires a diplomatic foundation to be in place. Believe it or not, they actually adhere to the rule of law far better than anybody in the West does.

They have domestic issues—things have to be done legally—and they also have relationships with nations defined by agreements. This is why the twelve-day conflict was so frustrating, because everybody was saying, "Where's Russia? Where's Russia?" But it was Iran that didn't ratify the strategic framework agreement. So there could be no Russia, because there was no agreement. Now they have an agreement—now they have a strategic framework agreement. This gives Russia a tremendous amount of political, um, legitimacy and viability. There's now a foundation of diplomacy upon which they can, uh, act. They can act aggressively against a, um, against a Gulf region that has behaved egregiously, because they're empowered to do so through their agreement with Iran. And that's why I think you see Lavrov doing what he's doing—because Russia's firmly in a legally sound, legally secure position to be lecturing people about their behavior.

#Glenn

Thank you for sharing your insights and, yeah, for taking the time.

#Scott Ritter

Okay, thanks. Sorry about the internet—but hey, it is what it is. It happens.

#Scott Ritter

Okay, bye-bye.