

Ray McGovern: Israel Lost the Iran War - May Use Nuclear Weapons

Ray McGovern was a CIA officer for 27 years, he chaired the National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs. McGovern discusses why Israel may use nuclear weapons, as it lost the war against Iran and has no acceptable off-ramp. 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

Glenn, thank you for having me.

#Glenn

Well, this war with Iran is often treated as a US-Iranian war, but in reality, it's already a regional war. However, one actor we hear surprisingly little about—given that they fired the first shot—is Israel. I guess part of the reason is that we don't get much video or information about the damage being done there. But I thought it could be a good place to start, to discuss how vulnerable you think Israel is in this war, and overall, how the war is going for Israel.

#Ray McGovern

Well, Glenn, as usual, you asked the right question. I was going to start with this if I could, and now I can. This is an existential war for Israel. Iran's going to survive this in one way or another. The U. S. hopefully will too. But Israel has put all its eggs in one basket. They've twisted Donald Trump in such a way that they started this thing—and by the admission of our Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, who is also the National Security Advisor to Donald Trump, which means, by the way, he's the funnel through which all intelligence comes.

In other words, the CIA reports through Marco Rubio, the National Security Council Director, okay? So what Trump gets, he gets through Marco Rubio. That explains part of it. But, I mean, if people don't know this, Marco Rubio admitted that Israel said, "Oh, we're going to attack," and then they did. And we were afraid the Iranians would say, "Oh, maybe the U.S. is guilty of this," and then they'd attack us back. So we had to preempt a retaliatory strike from Iran—retaliating because Israel attacked it. He said that.

#Glenn

It's right out there.

#Ray McGovern

Okay.

#Glenn

My God.

#Ray McGovern

Well, just to bring this down from the sublime to the mundane—we have a young woman who helps us out here. She was here this morning, and I said, "Please, Rosanna, tell me, what are your friends all saying about this war?" And she said, "Oh, well, they don't like it at all. The thing they don't like is there's no plan. There's no plan at all. How can they do this without any plan?" I said, "Okay, fine. Well, why did he do it?" Now, my daughter is really smart—she went to college and all that kind of stuff. "I don't know," she said. I asked, "What do your friends say about that?" "All they care about," she said, "is that Trump won't rule out sending troops."

Our sons are brothers. But yeah, why did he do it then? I don't know. It's crazy. It's crazy. And I said, "Rosanna, you don't know it because the majority of American people don't know it—even though the Secretary of State of the United States has said it—because Israel attacked Iran and mousetrapped us into doing precisely the same thing when we were this close, this close, to a deal." Now, how does McGovern know that? Come on, Ron McGovern. I don't see that in the New York Times. Well, he was a mediator in those very crucial talks in Geneva between the Americans and the Iranian foreign minister, okay?

And when the mediator—the Omani foreign minister, that is, the foreign minister of Oman—who was an honest broker dealing with both sides, when that session was finished, he got on a plane and went to Washington. He said to the vice president, "We almost have a deal. The Iranians have really backed off on their requirements about enrichment. They're making all kinds of concessions. As a matter of fact, we might even get UN inspectors there for the first time in history. So, oh, it's close." And then—I think because he smelled a rat—he went on with Margaret Brennan, the CBS reporter, and told her the same thing: "We're really close now. This is amazing." Now, that was the 27th of February. It was the 26th that they had met in Geneva with this same Omani foreign minister mediating—if I have to say that again, okay?

#Ray McGovern

What happened? All of a sudden, within hours—

#Ray McGovern

After getting this news, Rubio—first and foremost—there was the attack on Iran. So how does this figure? I mean, there are complaints now. The latest one is that the Omanis and others think that Witkoff and Kushner lied about when they gave their report to the president, saying, “No, no, the Iranians are in transition.” I don't rule that out. The two of them are shite-hooked. In the Bronx, we call them shysters, okay? They can't be trusted. But in any case, the deal was this close, okay? All of a sudden, Rubio and maybe—well, Hegseth for sure, maybe the vice president—said, “No, no, Bibi has already launched his attacks. We'll do it for Israel.” So I said to my daughter, “Look, you ought to ask the last question.”

Why, if all this had no planning, did we do it? And you should realize that the reason none of you even think to ask that question is because it's not in the news. It's not in the Times or the Post or even online. It's very rarely said that we got into this war for Israel. Now, just let me tie up this dissertation here. For Israel now, it's an existential war. That means they are about to be obliterated—pardon the term, okay? The Iranians have the wherewithal to do that. That was proven in June, and that's why I naively thought this would never happen. I mean, would Trump want to risk the obliteration of Israel? The closing of the Strait of Hormuz? Losing the election in November, with gas prices at ten dollars a gallon?

I mean, of course, he wouldn't be so stupid or dumb as to start a war against Iran. And he did it. So, two things here. We have a president who's not only a delusional Marxist, but I'd suggest that he's—he's **wahnsinnig**, okay? Now, I know you Norwegians don't like to use German terms and all that, but I know German. All I know in Norwegian is **tusen takk**, okay? **Wahnsinn** in German—I mean, it's just “off your rocker,” okay? An inflated kind of thinking that you can do whatever the hell you want. **Wahnsinnig** is almost as bad as **zwegverrückt**, which means really crazy, and when I lived in Germany, you could be convicted for calling somebody that. Okay, well, I'm not in Germany.

That's what we have here. And just to tie this up, I've spent half a century trying to put myself in the shoes of Kremlin leaders. I know they have an equivalent of the branch we had—now it's a division in the CIA—that did psychological profiles at a distance, okay? At a distance, meaning you can't interview Trump, but you can get all the information together. And even though psychiatrists don't like to do this without direct access, well, you do it anyway. Why? Because the stakes are so high. When I was at the CIA, we had wonderful people working on this. I had biographical profiles on Chernenko and Andropov, and later on Gorbachev.

So the Kremlin, I'm sure, has this kind of unit. Now, it boggles my mind to put myself in the place of a Gorbachev-era president's daily briefer, which I was, one-on-one, during Reagan's first term, '81 to '85. What are they going to tell Putin? Well, we know this guy is unreliable, that he's deceitful, that he tells a lot of lies, and he's kind of narcissistic. But now we know he's **wahnsinnig**. Now we know

he's **verrückt**. And what will he do? Last thing here—maybe I'm projecting—but I thought they would never do this stupid thing for precisely the reasons of what's happening now, okay? So when people talk about putting boots on the ground, or threatening to use a nuclear weapon...

#Ray McGovern

I said I would never do that—because, because, because.

#Ray McGovern

But the because's don't matter anymore. The logic doesn't hold. And maybe this is—I'll just add this—in Kremlinology, we had a very sustained, orderly way of analyzing public media. When people were saying things like X, Y, and Z would be preconditions for negotiations or for a settlement, and then all of a sudden they only said X and didn't mention Y and Z—oh, wow! That meant, and I can tell you this is accurate, that they were willing to deal on intermediate nuclear forces. And that deal was made, and it held for 32 years, okay?

We saw that they're backing off from public statements, but that doesn't work with Trump. Trump can say, "We require A, B, C, and D," and then he says five times, "We require A, B," and doesn't mention the rest. And his vice president says, "We require A," four times in four minutes on Fox. McGovern thinks, "Oh my God, maybe there's a little bit of hope there." Forget about it, McGovern. Kremlinology and logic do not apply when analyzing Donald Trump. And that is a real burden for the presidential daily briefers of Vladimir Putin. I think you'll agree.

#Glenn

But when you say it's existential for Israel, that's usually a word you don't want to hear when it comes to powerful states, because once something is existential, they can't afford defeat. Which then begs the question: what might Israel do? Because we're in a very difficult position. The Iranians also consider this to be an existential threat, and they can't just let the U.S. walk away, reopen the Strait of Hormuz, and then in six months the U.S. and Israel are back yet again. And given that none of the underlying problems have been resolved, the objective will remain to knock Iran out of the Eurasian chessboard.

So, given that this is the case, the Iranians can't afford to let this one go without returning to the old status quo. So what does this mean for Israel? Because if they risk being decimated here, they have nuclear weapons. They don't strike me as the most restrained of countries, as we've seen in all the wars currently ongoing as well. So what do you think Israel is going to do if the pain becomes too great? I mean, at the moment, we're not seeing any pictures coming out of Israel. They don't want to project the idea that they're taking big losses.

But, you know, this could flip at some point, where they want to do the exact opposite—show how much destruction Iran has caused. At that point, you risk starting to hear more about possible nuclear retaliation. Israel has a right to survive, essentially the right to exist. There are a lot of crazy things happening these days. This doesn't even seem that crazy—that it could happen, if not with strategic nuclear weapons, then at least something limited, tactical, just to force the Iranians' hand, to make them capitulate, essentially. Do you see a pathway there toward the actual use of nuclear weapons?

#Ray McGovern

Glenn, that's your second most interesting and appropriate question. That's what I was going to say. Yes, yes. You know, when I look at Netanyahu and Trump—but in this case, primarily Netanyahu—I ask myself, okay, given what you know about this fellow, McGovern, and what he's willing to do in terms of genocide and forced starvation, when he's been led to believe that he has some sort of handle on Trump—maybe it has a lot to do with Jeffrey Epstein—but anyhow, he's confident that he has his handle on Trump. Well, would he accept defeat? Would he say, "Okay, it was a bad idea"? I don't think so. And I don't think the Iranians would let them do that now that they have the upper hand, and that's the big new reality.

I think it's been proven now that the Iranians have more weapons, more rockets, more missiles—and the Iranians are going to prevail in this thing. Not to mention the damage happening to the whole world because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which was entirely predictable. So what's Netanyahu going to do? Well, Sy Hersh wrote a book a couple of decades ago about the Samson Option—the biblical narrative being that when Samson pulled the temple down rather than capitulate or whatever, he just pulled the whole temple down. Would Netanyahu do that, thinking that maybe he could fly off to Berlin again and hide in one of those little shelters?

I don't know, but I think the chances are better than even—and this is scary as hell—that he wouldn't stop before actually using, not just threatening, but using a nuclear weapon or two. And whether that would work or not, I just don't think it would. The opprobrium—he'd be crowned the rogue state of the world forever if he did that. Nobody would cooperate with him, I don't think, unless maybe people like, oh, the neocons coming out of the woodwork who supported both the war in Iraq and this war in Iran would back Netanyahu. So yeah, that's a long-winded way of saying that four weeks ago, I drew a parallel.

I said, look, I think Netanyahu would probably use the nuclear option in extremis, okay? That fancy word really means having your back up against the wall. That's why it's new, Glenn. As you know as a historian—and I know as an old guy—not since the Cuban Missile Crisis has any nuclear state been forced in extremis. Now, John Kennedy, one of my idols, President John F. Kennedy, brought me

down to Washington along with a whole bunch of really great people, saying, "Well, we'll do something for our country." And some of us are still around. What he said in his major speech at the University of Maryland in early 1963 was this.

#Ray McGovern

The thing that must be avoided in our relations between two nuclear powers—that is, the U.S. and the Soviet Union at the time—is ever forcing a choice on a nuclear power, a choice between a humiliating retreat and using those nuclear weapons. Now, why do I say that? Because it almost happened. If he hadn't been adroit enough to dismiss his generals and go with his brother Bobby and others like Llewellyn Thompson, the previous ambassador, it could have gone the other way. They said, "Look, Khrushchev is willing to do a deal. Talk to him directly." And they did—and there was no war. And you and I today get to talk about these things, okay? It was that close. So that was September, October 1962. Here's John Kennedy on June 10, 1963.

#Ray McGovern

Count the months between, and now he says, look, we've been through the worst. I know what it's like to think about blowing up the world. The last thing you want to do is force another nuclear power into a choice between a humiliating retreat and using nuclear weapons. Now, Khrushchev—or slava bory, thank God—was adroit enough to say, okay, if we make it look like a deal where you're pulling the U.S. missiles out of Turkey, yeah, I can talk to my military and say, well, we've got a deal. And that happened. So Kennedy was hell-bent and determined not to let that happen again.

So he reached out to the Russians and said, look, our children breathe the same air. We want the same good things for our children. Among all the powers of the world, Russia and the United States have never been at war with each other—almost uniquely. So let's deal. And, of course, he said, we're going to cease testing nuclear weapons. And within months, because of adroit political action, the Senate confirmed a partial test ban treaty. What I'm saying is that this goes back to the beginning of the real nuclear confrontational age.

And since then, since 1962, there's been no likelihood that the U.S. or the Soviet Union would overstep that red line and threaten the other with a humiliating retreat. Now, what was the next big issue? Russiagate. As you know, my friends and I—veteran intelligence professionals for sanity—knew that was a distrustful, dishonest thing from the get-go. One of my colleagues said, "Ray, you know, you're a one-act pony, right? Why do you keep focusing on this?" And then a radio guy says, "Well, why do you keep pounding on it?" It's because Russia has nuclear weapons. That's why. Oh yeah—and Ukraine was judged to be an existential threat to Russia.

And we know how that's coming out. OK. Luckily, that's not going to be a nuclear explosion. So all I'm saying here is that this is unique. Since the Cuban Missile Crisis—do the math—that was 1962. What is it, 2026 now? So we have a state that stole nuclear technology from the United States,

whose prime minister was one of the thieves who stole that technology. And one of the reasons John Kennedy was so disliked by our military and by our Zionists was because he wanted to prevent Israel from getting a nuclear weapon. Some people think—and I think there's some evidence for this—that's one of the reasons they got rid of him.

Let's face it, the chief plotter—the CIA counterintelligence master—was the liaison with Israel, and nothing changed. If I or any of my colleagues, or anyone in my branch, wrote something that mentioned Israel, even if it was just about Sino-Soviet relations, we had to get it cleared with this guy. So he was the ringleader of all this. And of course, he was tight with Israel. There's ample evidence that James Angleton was involved in both of these escapades, so close to Israel and so much a part of getting rid of John Kennedy, partly because of his resistance to Israel getting a nuclear weapon.

There's even evidence that Angleton was at least turning a blind eye to the provision—or the stealing—of nuclear technology behind Kennedy's back. So, you know, that's my case here. Just look: my very educated, fifty-year-old children are completely adrift, saying, "Oh my God, there's no plan, there's no plan, why did he do this?" They don't ask why he did it. They always say, "Oh, it could be this—our boots on the ground," or, "Oh my God," you know. But none of them take the time to ask why Trump did this. And why Trump did this was because he's subservient to Israel. And that may include this heinous—talk about moral turpitude.

Well, you got it in spades with Epstein and the people Trump's been associating with, and the fact that Netanyahu is certainly not above bringing his own little portfolio of photos and videos to Mar-a-Lago, saying, "Oh, I just want to remember..." The FBI is able to block out a lot of this stuff, but, "We'll protect it, Mr. President, unless you don't cooperate." That's a mafia-type approach—and would Trump be above that? I don't think so. Sorry for this long explanation, but I feel really strongly about it, because Israel has had this hold on us—to the tune of shooting up 34 U.S. sailors on the USS Liberty during the 1967 war—and never being held accountable. Then, of course, they learned, without any doubt, that they could literally get away with murder, and the Senate, the House, and even the U.S. Navy would cover it up.

#Glenn

No, the U.S.–Israeli relationship is quite interesting—not just in terms of understanding a lot of U.S. foreign policy, but also in what's happening in domestic politics. I think especially, well, not just on the Republican side but the Democratic side too, there's this split you see now, where sympathies toward Israel have declined so much. And even within Trump's own camp, this whole idea of "America First," you know, it united a very broad variety of people. A large part of that group believed that "America First" meant U.S. interests would be put before Israel's. Now they see this war, which they can't really explain without talking about Israel.

Yeah, it's something that also divides Donald Trump's base. But you said something interesting—that yes, it's an existential conflict for Iran and for Israel, but for the U.S. it's not really existential. That being said, there's still a lot at stake here: its credibility as a superpower. If this war is lost, the Gulf states might no longer be viable frontline states. They could be swept away, or, alternatively, if they want to survive, they might come to the conclusion that being a frontline state doesn't make you safe—it makes you more vulnerable. And if that happens, the whole petrodollar system could start to fall apart.

Without these recycled dollars, the AI bubble—the AI race—comes to an end. Alliance systems around the world could be challenged further. You know, also in domestic politics, this would be a disaster for Trump. He already declared victory, a little bit like George Bush's "mission accomplished" moment, which he came to regret, of course—and his ego on top of all of this. So, I can't imagine Trump accepting it. That being said, I can't imagine him using nuclear weapons either, but he has other options. I mean, what I'm getting at is, I saw two comments come out, I think, on the same day.

That is, you know, we're going to hit Iran twenty times harder—but also, we've run out of targets to hit in Iran. Which then raises the question: how do you bring Iran to the negotiating table, make them offer concessions? It just sounds like they think Iran needs the "Gaza treatment," that this is the direction the U.S. might go. Anyway, that's too much of my own take. I was wondering, how do you see this? What will the U.S. do now that it didn't get regime change? It didn't get people standing up, going against the government. The army didn't collapse. The Iranians are able to absorb pain—and also to inflict pain on the U.S., the Gulf states, and Israel.

#Ray McGovern

Well, let's deal with the Gulf states—the Arab states—first. Okay, Putin got on the phone just two days after the attacks and talked to each and every one of them.

#Ray McGovern

What was that all about?

#Ray McGovern

Well, I think he knew what was coming and said, "Look, remember how you've been real cozy with the United States—buying all the weapons and all that? You've got this deal where they're supposed to defend you, huh? Watch the next couple of days and see what happens. I'll call you back later." Oh my God, that deal has fallen apart, because the defense against Iran is completely gone. Iran

has free rein now, and they're doing it—they're attacking all these U.S. bases and trying to reassure the Gulf states, saying, "Look, this isn't about you. It's about your stupid policymakers who thought the U.S. could protect you—and they can't."

So what are you going to do now, huh? You've got all this wealth—who are you going to trust to deal with? The Americans? Well, see what happens over the next couple of days, okay? The next day, you have Lavrov speaking, and this is really interesting. He's in a meeting with other Arab Gulf leaders, right? And he says—very clever—"I'll use an old Bedouin expression: have you not learned that you cannot ride two camels at the same time?" I don't know who gave him that line, but it was exactly the right one. So as far as I'm concerned, the U.S. is not going to get bases back in these Gulf countries.

The Gulf countries still have their oil, to the degree that their sites haven't been obliterated, so they still have the wherewithal to persist. But are they going to throw their lot in with the United States? Certainly not in the way they used to, okay? Okay. Now, I forget what else you got into, but I had some comments on your other remarks. Let's see if I made some—yeah, I want you to mention this: one of the things most Americans don't understand, because many weren't of age in 2001, 2002, and 2003, is that all they really know about is 9/11, right?

#Ray McGovern

And then they know, or think they know, that we had to go after people who might have been responsible for 9/11. And the Afghans—well, that was one thing. But we tried to identify the head of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, with 9/11. And how did we do that? We said that Saddam Hussein had ties—active ties—with al-Qaeda. Seventy-five percent of the American people in, I'm sorry, 2002 or 2003, thought that to be true, okay? Colin Powell spoke authoritatively at the UN, and he talked about a, quote, "sinister nexus between Baghdad, Saddam Hussein, and al-Qaeda." Colin Powell knew that he was lying.

He said it anyway. What was the other thing? Oh, yes—Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Now, we, Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, set up our unit in January 2003, fully aware that they didn't have weapons of mass destruction—that our former colleagues were lying through their teeth to get promoted and win bonus awards, which they did, for writing that terrible estimate of October 1, 2002. So what happened? Well, they falsified the evidence. And you don't have to—let me just quote the Senate Intelligence Committee report. Now, this was five years in the making.

In June of 2008, they finally came to their conclusion, and it read, quote, "The intelligence used to justify the attack on Iraq was uncorroborated evidence—unsubstantiated, contradicted, or even non-existent," end quote. Non-existent? What the hell does non-existent intelligence look like? Well, I don't have to tell you, okay? It was manufactured. So why do I raise all this stuff? It's happening again.

And most people aren't aware of it because the press has concealed it, and no one was ever held accountable for Iraq. So it's worth mentioning. What we're saying now is, of course—depending on who you listen to—Iran, with an N. Now, Iran is close to getting a nuclear weapon, okay?

What are they going to do? They're going to give it to those terrorists—all those terrorists, which I call resistance forces, according to international law, in Lebanon and elsewhere. Those terrorists are going to get those nuclear weapons, you know. And again, don't take McGovern's word for this. We had the good fortune of getting a copy of the authentic notes from a briefing given by Sir Richard Dearlove, head of Britain's MI6, to Tony Blair on July 23, 2002. And what was that all about? Well, Tony Blair had been recruited by Bush to join in this war. It was going to be a great war. The other Europeans, well, they weren't real.

The Germans and the French—forget about them. We can do it by ourselves. Okay, but you know what? When you're planning a war, you'd like to be in more than just telephone contact with the other plotter, right? So even though Bush was calling Blair, or vice versa, once a week, Blair said to his intelligence chief, "Look, would you go over and talk to George Tenet," who was his opposite number—Director of Central Intelligence, head of all the intelligence agencies. "Talk to him, because he's so close to Bush. He'll know the real thing. Can you talk to him?" Well, Tenet didn't. He said, "No, I don't." And Bush insisted. And so—I know there were people, I know there were.

On the 20th of July, 2003, at CIA headquarters in Langley, Sir Richard Dearlove was thoroughly briefed. He got on the next aircraft, went back home to London, and three days later, at a meeting of the "twelve apostles" at noon—his big cabinet meeting, Blair's cabinet meeting, with all the major dignitaries—Blair said, "Okay, now, Sir Richard Dearlove, please tell us what the real scoop is." And this is what it was. This is a quote from the most operative paragraph: "George W. Bush has decided to attack Iraq. It will be justified by the conjunction of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism." My comment—translation: we're going to say that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, and we're going to link him to the terrorists, okay?

And then the final sentence of this paragraph: "But the intelligence and facts are being fixed around the policy." Period. End quote. So—the intelligence and the facts are being fixed around the policy. What's my lesson here? An unnecessary war. Completely unnecessary. Intelligence fixed around the policy. That's what we've got now. That's what we have now with respect to Iran. Why? Because no one was ever held accountable. Those senators who wrote that bona fide, accurate, authentic report saying some of the intelligence was non-existent—never held anybody accountable. George Tenet was allowed to go to his shelter in New Jersey and still get lots of money from the corporate entities he ostensibly works for. No one is held accountable. The people who wrote that National Intelligence Estimate of October 1, 2002, got pay increases and promotions.

Now, it's not quite that bad, because what's really interesting here with respect to Iran is that after that debacle, people who had some sense in Washington saw that the neocons—Cheney and Bush—wanted to do Iran next. As a matter of fact, the neocons were openly saying to everyone who would

listen, "Real men go to Tehran, not to Baghdad," right? They had the plans, okay? They were going to justify it for the same reasons. And what happened? Somebody said, "Let's get a National Intelligence Estimate done." Now, I think I've said this on your program before, but long story short, they got an honest guy from the State Department named Tom Fingar. He came in with his own people, and they worked for a whole year.

They benefited from some luck with new intelligence, and they said Iran stopped working on a nuclear weapon at the end of 2010. Third, it has not resumed work on a nuclear weapon. We said that unanimously—all 16 intelligence agencies at the time—and we said it with high confidence. Now, the good news is that the intelligence community has reiterated that judgment, including the fact that nuclear weapons are prohibited by the supreme leader, recently deceased, by a fatwa—which means a hell of a lot more than an encyclical or any other high-sounding religious statement, okay? Now, how long did they stand by that reasonable, authentic judgment after all the pressure from the lobby and from—my God—as recently as, oh, look at it, it's March, right? Last March.

At the end of March, Avril Haines, the Director of National Intelligence, repeated verbatim what the U.S. intelligence community had been saying since November 2007—namely, that Iran, if it had a nuclear weapons program at all, stopped at the end of 2003. Unanimous, high confidence, no reversal of the fatwa policy. She said that under oath in congressionally required testimony in March of last year. Where is Avril Haines now? Oh, wow. A friend of mine did a little cartoon with a milk carton—you know, a half-gallon milk carton—"Missing: Avril Haines." You know, tell us where she is, let her in. So, what's going to happen now? That testimony is congressionally required. What will happen when they come before the Senate, take their oath, and are asked, "Well, what do you think now?"

Did Iran start working on a nuclear weapon and you never told us? The honest answer would be no. They don't need a nuclear weapon. They have hypersonic missiles that can deliver heavy warheads. And I dare say, Glenn, they'll be doing precisely that in the next few weeks. Iran's not going to stop. And as Alex Cranor, one of the best analysts on this, says when he talks about the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, "You ain't seen nothing yet." That's going to hurt all of us, but it's going to hurt especially what Trump thinks he can do—because he can't do much. The only thing he could do, presumably, but maybe not, is restrain Netanyahu from using the ace in the hole, which you correctly called attention to: using a nuclear weapon or two.

#Glenn

Just one final brief question: are the hopes of regime change out the door now? Because, again, the core of a regime change operation would also entail winning the hearts and minds of the people and getting them to turn against their own government. But after killing their leader—which, for some reason, wasn't celebrated the way it was expected to be—and as the U.S. runs out of military targets, we're seeing more civilian targets hit to put pressure on the government.

So we saw the attacks on the desalination plant and the fuel depots, which then polluted and essentially destroyed the air in Tehran—the destruction of the capital. And Trump also, just to really drive the point home, went on Truth Social and wrote that they would hit Iran so hard the nation itself would be destroyed, that it would be unable to rebuild. And of course, I assume accidentally, but still, the killing of those 168 young girls—and then lying about it in such an obvious way. Is regime change now completely out of the question?

#Ray McGovern

Well, any kind of regime change is out of the question if you're thinking about a more malleable leadership in Iran. You don't have to be a crackerjack analyst to figure that out. The new supreme leader was in the house and was injured when his father was killed, his wife was killed, his teenage son was killed. He was spared, but apparently he's still in the hospital. That's why you don't see him, okay? So under those circumstances, and under what was said in his name—or what he said yesterday—there's no give at all in the Iranian position. They have the upper hand now. You know, we talk about our military leaders today. I'll tell you one thing that comes from Larry Wilkerson, who worked with Colin Powell not only as his chief of staff...

#Ray McGovern

Sorry, not only as his chief of staff in the State Department, but also when Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and when he was national security advisor to Bush—the first Bush. So what he said was, you know, at one point Powell turned to me and said, "Larry, the worst thing you can do is make an Air Force general head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Because all they know is bombing, bombing, bombing—then taking off again and bombing some more. And if we didn't learn that from World War II, if we didn't learn that from Vietnam, if we didn't learn that from Afghanistan and Libya—my God. So never, never pray for an Air Force general to be head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

#Glenn

Now, where did Trump find this guy?

#Ray McGovern

Well, the smart people say, "Well, he was retired, but before he retired, he showed up in this nice blue uniform—except he didn't have his cap on. He had a MAGA hat on." And Trump said, "Oh my God, we took a shine to him right away. What's this guy like?" My God, if he has an ounce of honesty in him, he's got to tell Trump, "Look, we warned—my colleagues on the Joint Chiefs and I—that this might not work." But I don't know whether there's an ounce of honesty in him. It's not working, okay?

And if the military can't restrain Trump in his present mind—my God, I don't know who can. We have... we have neocons now appearing. Wormser—David Wormser. We have Douglas Feith, the brain trust, so to speak, behind Cheney's war against Iraq, coming out and making idiot pronouncements. So the neocons still live. They're still given a lot of leeway in the press, and they get their op-eds printed. So, I'm a little bit forgetting now exactly what your point was. Let me ask you if you could repeat your main question there, and I'll try to be more brief.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, if regime change is now out of the question—yeah.

#Ray McGovern

Well, if it's out of the question and the Iranians are not willing to deal with Trump—and you can understand why they might not be willing to deal with him—I mean, twice, right when negotiations were nearing completion, they were tricked into... there was an attack, okay? Two times. So was it that George W. Bush said, "Fool me once, fool me twice"? He couldn't get it right, right? Well—

#Ray McGovern

Well, we never thought you'd try to fool me twice, but you did. But we're ready this time. We're ready this time. Fool me thrice? Fool me three times? Give me a break. So they have the upper hand. Now, are there forces for moderation here? There are. The Russians and the Chinese can come in and support the new Ayatollah—the new Supreme Leader. He's not quite an Ayatollah yet, I'm told. And say, "Look, Mr. Trump, when you called me," says Putin, "when you called me just three days ago, I made the best of it. I had Ushakov say that we had a businesslike and constructive, and also an open, frank discussion. So I'm not cutting off ties with you."

But you know what? This is crazy. We're not going to let this happen. You say, "Oh, please use your good offices with Iran." Forget about it. You say, "Please don't give Iran the intelligence they need." Mr. Trump, have you heard? Do you know what the word "karma" means? Look it up—karma. What are you guys doing with the Ukrainians? We're not going to stop our aid to Iran. So we're going to have to make a deal. Short term, midterms—that's one thing. But the topsy-turvy in the economy, with the Strait of Hormuz continuing to be closed, that's bedlam, okay? So, Mr. Trump, we can help you, but you're going to have to lay off, and you're going to have to restrain Israel.

Now, we Russians, says Putin, have a unique chance to mediate this thing. We have reasonably good ties with Israel—I mean, two million Russians in Israel, right? And of course, we have very good ties with Iran, good ties with China. We have a lot to offer here, but however we make this look better than it is, you're going to have to back off. And the sooner you back off, the less you'll lose in the midterm elections. So we're willing to help. But Iran doesn't want any help from us or

anybody else right now. They're winning. So, well, let's wait a while. And, yeah, come back to us, and we'll try to be honest brokers.

Now, can they do that? Well, you know, they almost had a mutual defense treaty with Iran. The Iranians said no—that shows Iran's position. Now, to reflect on that, the Russians wanted to make their strategic treaty with Iran a mutual defense treaty, and it was the Iranians who said, "No, no, we're not ready for that." I think they probably regret that now. But that shows how important Iran is to Russia. I mean, it's a soft underbelly through which all kinds of terrorism and other threats come. OK, so that's one thing. The other thing—what else was I going to say here? Oh, yeah, well, you know, they abstained on this resolution at the UN yesterday. I was appalled.

I mean, you can't condemn—I mean, you can't vote against a measure that criticizes Iran and doesn't even mention that they were attacked. But why did they abstain? Well, I think they're just trying to preserve what's left of an image of being able to act as honest brokers. They want to be in a position to say, "Okay, we might have vetoed that thing, but we're trying to work things out." And the stakes are very high—not least, of course, because of the continued human destruction exemplified by those little girls in Minab, as well as the threat that Netanyahu will be tempted to use when it was born.

You know, thinking about Minab, Glenn, I had a poem from Daniel Berrigan, a good friend of mine, that I recited on another platform. But I have another one now from a very close Iranian woman poet. Her name is Avidah. It would take about a minute, maybe a little more, to read. She's addressing the little girls of Minab. I don't know if we have another minute—no? Of course. It's okay? Okay. The title is **In Memoriam.** Where were your dreams? Where were your hopes, sweet little girls of Minab? Were you to be the new blooms of the tulips or the daffodils, sweet little girls of Minab?

Were you fasting, hungry, thirsty, sweet little girls of Minab, when the Tomahawk blew you to smithereens and burned you to ashes without leaving a trace of you—my angels, my beautiful, sweet little girls of Minab? Tell me, who has the heart? Who has so much hatred in their hearts to burn to ashes sweet little girls, with hopes and dreams like tulips and daffodils swaying under the blue dome of the sky, innocently hoping and waiting for a new spring to arrive? Tell me, who has so much hatred? Who has so much hatred in their hearts? Now, from the sublime to the mundane, we know how that happened. We know who killed the sweet little girls of Minab. His name is Hekseth.

He calls himself the Secretary of War. Why can I pin the blame on him? Because he deleted the unit in the Pentagon that verifies there will be no civilian casualties in a target list. Blaming the Defense Intelligence Agency or outdated target lists doesn't suffice. There was a way to check those things. There was a procedure. And Peter Hekseth, Secretary of War, who says "have no mercy," deleted that unit. Now, how do I know that? Scott Ritter knows chapter and verse on this. He's pointed out that there were four Tomahawk strikes, and then another one that had the ability to loiter over the scene and send back photography to the control tower. The control tower was back.

Yep, there are other people coming on. Oh, look, there are a lot of people. These were the little girls going into the prayer shelter, okay? And the parents coming to pick them up—vaporized. Why? Because there were thermobaric capabilities within that fifth Tomahawk. So, you know, it's okay to be a little bit angry about this thing. And when I see the President of the United States say, "No, the Iranians did it themselves," that was a physical, that was a temporal impossibility. And I can say that because this was the first wave of the attack on February 28th—the same wave where the Supreme Leader was killed in his own home, not in a deep shelter.

Same way it had happened before the Iranians even knew there was something coming. So the Iranians are going to be firing off inaccurate missiles at a school before they even know they're under attack? Give me a break. What we have is a meretricious—that's a nice way of saying a lying son of a gun—as president. And Hegseth said, "No, no, we're investigating." Right. Hegseth is going to investigate what he himself is personally responsible for—a man who gives no quarter and who says, "Show no mercy." That's what we've become, and American citizens need to realize that, to apportion blame where it belongs. When you kill 163 little girls between the ages of six and twelve, you must be held accountable.

#Glenn

I very much agree. That's one of the startling things—that the brutality is so celebrated now, that this idea that, you know, Hegseth says even following the rules of engagement is somehow politically correct, something that prevents us from being strong. It's quite grotesque. And if you're on Twitter, if you follow the White House, almost every day they put out little videos where they make clips of video games with the bombing of Iran. It's war porn. It's a celebration of violence. It's something very ugly, especially coming from the White House. But here we are. It looks like imperial decline can be ugly indeed. So thank you very much for taking the time.

#Ray McGovern

Thank you for inviting me, Glenn Diesen. Much appreciated.