

Larry Wilkerson: Trump's Pick Joe Kent QUITS - Israel Goes Nuclear

#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Tuesday, March 17th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Col. Larry Wilkerson, is here with us. Welcome back, Derek.

#Larry

Good to be with you, Nima. Happy St. Patrick's Day. Yeah, happy to be here.

#Nima

Larry, let me start with the breaking news about Joe Kent, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center. He resigned in protest against the imposed war on Iran. He said, "I cannot in good conscience support the ongoing war in Iran. Iran posed no imminent threat to our nation, and it's clear that we started the war due to pressure from Israel and its powerful American lobby." And we had Donald Trump responding, talking about what happened and how he feels about Joe Kent's resignation. Here's what he said.

#Speaker 03

Your director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, just resigned today. He said he can't support your conflict with Iran. What's your reaction to that?

#Speaker 04

Well, I read his statement. I always thought he was a nice guy, but I always thought he was weak on security—very weak on security. I didn't know him well, but he seemed like a pretty nice guy. But when I read his statement, I realized it's a good thing he's out, because he said Iran was not a threat. Iran was a threat. Every country realized what a threat Iran was. The question was whether or not they wanted to do something about it. And many people—many of the greatest military scholars—have been saying for years that presidents should have taken out Iran because they wanted a nuclear weapon. If we didn't do the attack—or I'll go a step further, if I didn't terminate the Iran nuclear deal, one of the worst deals ever made by Barack Hussein Obama—remember when they sent Boeing 757s over there loaded with cash?

#Larry

Yeah. Do you have the letter in front of you? Do you have Joe Kent's letter in front of you? Yeah. Read about the third paragraph from the bottom — the one about his wife.

#Nima

Let me just find it here. Yeah, he's talking about how his wife was lost in Syria—was killed in Syria. Yeah. And that's why he hates the war. That's why he feels this way about these endless wars in the Middle East.

#Larry

And you got to know Joe Kent before. Joe Kent was really a MAGA staple—he was a MAGA beast before. And for him to do this, kind of like Charlie Kirk having his epiphany about Israel, is remarkable, because he was an attack dog for MAGA. That's why they put him in the position they did. And Trump's remarks there were just stupid—just stupid. Everybody knows that Donald Trump and Joe Kent were pretty close. He wouldn't have made him head of the counterterrorism center if they weren't. So this turnaround, and that expression of pain caused by the loss of his wife, tells me that Joe Kent had a real epiphany himself about what this war is all about and what Syria was all about—because that's what he's really saying.

And everything Trump has done with regard to that region—and, for that matter, with regard to Ukraine too, and Venezuela, and potentially Cuba, and even threatening Greenland—is Donald Trump. That's Donald Trump. In other words, he's worse than any of the worst Western Roman Empire Caesars we think we know so much about, whether it's Caligula or Nero or any of the others who were more or less at the bottom of the heap. Trump is worse. And that's what Joe Kent is saying. Charlie Kirk said it about the connection with Israel; now Joe Kent has said it about Donald Trump.

#Nima

Do you expect Tulsi Gabbard to do something?

#Larry

I was thinking about that this morning. Who's next? It's got to be Tulsi. She simply has to do something to resurrect her future. She's not a stupid woman—she's smart, she's a good politician. She had the right instincts about the JCPOA after studying it carefully. She knew more about it than I did when I went in to brief her. I stopped the briefing—I'd brought three experts with me, including Trita Parsi—and I said, "Ma'am, Congresswoman, we don't need to waste your time. You know more about this than we do. All we're going to do is wrap up this briefing, get out of your

office, and ask you to be with us on it rather than against it." And she said, "I'll make my decision. I'm still studying." So she needs to resurrect herself. She's got a lot of potential. She's still young. But if she stays with this ship till it goes down, she's finished.

#Nima

The whole agenda, Larry, somehow is falling apart—not just because, you know, when you see Europeans not that interested in getting involved in an offensive against Iran. That shows something's going on, not just in the United States but outside the United States too. Because so far, we can't say the Europeans haven't been involved. Since day one, they've been trying to help the United States defensively, and they've tried to defend Israel. But they're not that eager—they don't want to be part of this offensive effort, first and foremost. They see that as a red line, I guess you could put it that way. But the whole concept, the whole rhetoric, is just falling apart. And you can see who's the establishment and who's not. For example, Mike Johnson came out today totally defending Donald Trump. And here's what he said, Larry.

#Speaker 05

Yeah. On the Gang of Eight, I got all the briefings. We all understood there was clearly an imminent threat—that Iran was very close to enriching nuclear material, and they were building missiles at a pace no one in the region could keep up with. They were far outpacing our allies, our friends, and us in defense capability, because we had personnel and installations everywhere—members of the armed services and civilians in the region. Iran was building up ballistic missiles at such a rapid pace, and we knew their plan was to fire them at Americans. The commander-in-chief and his administration had a very difficult decision to make.

I don't know where Joe Kent is getting his information, but he wasn't in those briefings—clearly—because the secretary of state, the secretary of war, everyone, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Kane, they all had exquisite intelligence. We understood this was a serious moment for us. Had the president waited, I'm personally convinced we would have had mass casualties—Americans, service members, and others there—and our installations would have been dramatically damaged. So we had to act. The president felt he had to strike first to prevent those mass casualties. That's the summary. I can't tell you the classified part, but that's the public version, and it's accurate.

#Larry

Let me just tell you what he didn't say. This is what Johnson would have said if he'd been honest and free with his words—maybe at the beginning, maybe in the middle, maybe at the end: "We are on God's side. We are on Jesus Christ's side. And we are going to triumph because it is time for Jesus to come back down. It is time for Armageddon. It is time for the end times." That's what Mike Johnson would have said if he didn't think it would be, at that point, politically bad to say that from the Speaker's rostrum—because that's Mike Johnson. Otherwise, it was mostly lies.

There wasn't consensus. No question in my mind now—after exploring it more fully—there wasn't consensus. And certainly, Kane... if he didn't advise against it, he gave enough information that any commander in chief with half a brain would have said, "Maybe I'm not going here," and picked up the phone and called Bibi Netanyahu and told him to cease and desist, because he wouldn't be with him. Because Bibi would not have gone if the president had put his foot down and said that to him. Johnson's lying through his teeth. He's lying through his teeth.

#Nima

You know, the way he's talking—his point of view—is one of the main reasons people came out and voted for Donald Trump. They thought Donald Trump would be different, but they see that he's the same. And those people, like Joe Kent, like Tucker Carlson, they're just...

#Larry

They're disgusted. They're disgusted with their own people, if you will, because they got led down the primrose path by a lot of folks making arguments they were sympathetic to. Hell, I'm sympathetic with some of those arguments. I'm sympathetic with the argument that we don't need to have wars in the Middle East—stupid wars like Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and so forth. That's what Trump was saying, and that's what attracted them to him. Go back and look at those comments. I wish Johnson had Bibi Netanyahu up on the right screen while he was talking—where Bibi says, over and over again for 20 years, that Iran is going to have a nuclear weapon in a week or two.

Iran is going to have a nuclear weapon next year. Iran is at 90% enrichment. How many times did Bibi say that? And Johnson was just saying the same thing. This is all manufactured garbage to support a president who has absolutely reversed himself on his main tenet regarding national security: no more stupid wars. Did you listen to me, people? And especially no more stupid wars in the Middle East. That's what he said repeatedly. That's why they voted for him—many of them. That's why they voted. Now he's losing them. He's losing them so fast it's like rats jumping off a sinking ship. And Johnson is going to stay there till the ship goes down, because Johnson believes it's the end times. He believes God is directing this war.

#Nima

Larry, what does Donald Trump want from the Europeans and from NATO allies when he says they're not helping us? Here's Donald Trump criticizing the Europeans.

#Speaker 04

All of the NATO allies agreed with us, but they don't want to help, you know, despite the fact that we've helped them so much. We have thousands of soldiers in different countries all over the world, and

they don't want to help us—which is amazing. I mean, amazing. I didn't do a full-court press, because I think if I had, they probably would have. But we don't need help. That war is over. It's been prosecuted for a long time, as far as I'm concerned—almost from day one. We knocked out many of their assets. We knocked out the navy essentially in a couple of days.

#Larry

They don't have a navy to speak of, so he knocked out a navy they don't have to speak of. He knocked out an air force that was so old it couldn't fly. The only thing they have, Nima, you know—the only thing they have is ballistic missiles, and they have plenty of them. And, you know, Churchill—Churchill is always quoted as saying everything that's ever been said in the world—but Churchill said the only thing worse than having allies is not having them. Donald, you need to go to school. You need to go to military school. You need to learn what it means to not have allies. And he's losing them—rapidly losing them.

And he's losing them because they don't want to do stupid things like he does. And in one case, at least, the Spanish leader—he's losing him because the guy has a sense of ethics and morality. And oh, by the way, did you know two more countries joined the case against Israel in the court? Two more countries. I think before we're through with this, we're going to have anywhere from thirty to forty countries signing on to South Africa's application to the court for prosecuting Bibi Netanyahu. And you've got more countries each time, so if he enters that country, he gets arrested immediately.

#Nima

Do you feel that Joe, you know, knows—I'm talking about the joke—does he know something that we don't know in terms of the casualties, or in terms of what's happened so far? Because somehow, when he criticizes what's happened in Syria, it shows that he's concerned about American lives as well. And it's not just about that. And what is the Trump administration putting out? They're saying six, seven casualties. But there was an interview today on Press TV with a senior Iranian intelligence official, and he said the United States suffered over 3,200 casualties and staggering equipment losses in the first week of the war. And, you know, the two sides don't come together. The two pictures don't match. So, many of us are wondering—is it possible that Donald Trump is hiding something?

#Larry

Well, I know he's hiding casualties. I don't know if he knows he's hiding casualties, because people are afraid to tell him the truth—especially if it's an unpleasant truth. They don't want to tell him, and the military is no exception to that. They won't tell him either. And let's just back up a minute and say, no matter where you look in America's history—even going all the way back to George Washington and the Revolutionary War, less so there, because Washington was probably one of the most upright and ethical military commanders we've ever had—America's lied about its casualties in

wars. We lied in Korea. We lied in Vietnam. We lied in World War II. We lied in World War I. Wilson was an inveterate liar. We never tell the American people the full cost of our decisions to go to war until well after the war is over.

Take the German counteroffensive in the Ardennes, where we lost 78,000 in less than four weeks. That's more casualties than General MacArthur took in the entire war in the Pacific and the Southwest Pacific Theater, which he commanded. And we didn't tell anybody. We didn't tell the American people. It didn't flow back immediately. So, yeah, there's a lot going on, but I don't know if Trump is doing it intentionally or if he's just not very well informed. I don't know what the total count is, but I know it's well over a hundred. I don't think Iran's figures are anywhere near accurate either. There's just no way to verify it because there's such a lockdown on real information—starting with the master lockdowner, Bibi Netanyahu. For example, I think the casualties in Israel are fairly large.

But he's not reporting anything. And the newspapers—even Haaretz—are saying things like, "Well, an Israeli was killed today walking across the street," or "An Israeli was wounded, but he wasn't wounded badly, she wasn't wounded badly," whatever. A schoolgirl was hit by a flying piece of shrapnel from a drone that Iron Dome had shot down. That's the way they describe their casualties. But I know they have more casualties than that. I know that, for example, 25% to 30% of the 90-plus-thousand call-up of the reserves went AWOL—didn't report—because they didn't want to go to Lebanon. So lies are just everywhere in this thing, and they've been there from the start. We lied about the diplomacy. We've lied about the war. We've lied about the casualties.

We're lying about Iran's capacity to withstand us. Just the president—just Trump—saying, "We destroyed their navy." Okay, okay. What navy? What boats did you destroy? You destroyed a few little boats, yeah, a few little boats. Okay, you torpedoed one—against international law. It was in international waters, coming back from an exercise with India. You torpedoed it. Oh, that was another war crime to add to our credit. I don't know how to parse this administration with regard to truth. They do not tell the truth. They've made a living on lying. So it's extremely difficult to say what's really happening.

We know, for example, that the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany—because we have people there—has, and the press has even carried some of this, told pregnant women to go away. It's told civilians in general to go away. It normally serves the community there. It has a fairly substantial throughput capacity for the central part of Europe, to send casualties back to America or wherever they need to go for treatment. We know they've shut down civilian care, and we know that casualties are coming into Landstuhl. But we don't know how many yet. We don't have someone standing there counting them coming in, but we know they're coming in.

And we know, for example, that Iran very carefully—painstakingly, even—took out four or five of the most important radars in neighboring countries. And when they took out those radars, they caused casualties. These are \$200 to \$300 million radars. One of them, as I understand it, was half a billion

dollars—\$500 million. They took them all out with drones and missiles and blinded us, blinded us in that capacity for that time. And as I said, there were casualties at each of those sites when they took them out. We know that the embassy in Baghdad has been hit inside the Green Zone, but we don't know the casualties. Rubio is hiding that. So, you know, how will you ever know what the real casualty count is? But we do know that significant casualties have already been taken—both civilian and military.

#Nima

Lindsey Graham says that Europe's refusal to provide the United States with assistance in the war with Iran will have broad and deep consequences because Donald Trump is angrier than ever before. Larry, let me ask you—because you didn't have time to answer the question with that clip—what do they want from Europe? What is Europe capable of that the United States cannot do in the Strait of Hormuz, for example?

#Larry

Well, I don't think the United States can do it in the Strait of Hormuz. I really don't. So what they're looking for is the kind—first of all, what the military is looking for is the kind of help we anticipated that interoperability with NATO forces would provide. And a case in point: we don't have a real fleet of minesweepers. We have some ships that have been called minesweepers because they were in the LCS class—you know, the one Lockheed sent off the ways one day, the first one they built, and it broke in half. So this is a really lousy class of ships, if you will, in most sailors' eyes. But we converted them. We didn't want to fess up that we'd spent hundreds of millions of dollars on ships that didn't work and had no utility, so we converted them into minesweepers in some cases.

Now, it's a real problem. Some of them have a metallic hull rather than a laminated plastic hull, so they're not very good as minesweepers. They detect mines—they attract mines if they have metal hulls. All to say that we depend on other countries in NATO who do have minesweepers, who practice it all the time and are very good at it. That was supposed to be part of the alliance: if we went to war under Article 5, they would provide the minesweeping. Same with other specialty areas. That's what we're looking for—we're looking for those specialty areas that NATO countries have in excess of what we have, especially minesweeping, to come to the Gulf and help us. And they don't want to do that. And I don't blame them one bit, the way Trump has treated Europe up to this point.

If I were a European leader, I'd look back at Trump and say, "You son of a bitch, would you like me to play the tape you had of your vice president over here at the Munich Security Conference? Would you like me to play the tape of Marco Rubio talking about it? Would you like me to play your tape of you talking about us? Because you're the one who started this split." Now, it was over Ukraine principally, but there are other issues too. Trump made some egregious statements about what

NATO had to offer to America's defense, and they didn't forget them. And they've got some real reasons for not being very cooperative. You've got the Spanish leader who's doing it, I think, for moral and ethical purposes—and I applaud him.

He has moral courage. But you've got other leaders doing it because they've got their own problems—significant problems. Look at what they just did in the EU. They passed a law around the time the special military operation started, almost five years ago, saying they would never again buy Arctic LNG from Russia. It's really sweet, the deal they have with Russia. It goes in European bottoms down to Bremerhaven or Le Havre, or one of the other ports, and they take everything in their own ships. All Russia does is top them off. Russia gets the money, and everything's copacetic.

And the Europeans have LNG out the yin-yang. What did they just do? They just bought all of Russia's Arctic LNG, and it's going to be shipped down to Europe now. And what did they say when someone in the press asked—I was watching it, I forget which leader it was—"Why did you do that? You said you weren't going to do that anymore. You're punishing Russia." Well, it doesn't start until January 27. Do we think they're going to stop on January 27? Hell no, they're not, because they've got to have that LNG. We're not going to supplement that LNG enough for them to get off Russia, and they're going to have to open the pipelines back up to Nima eventually.

So Russia's not happy with the way the United States is waging this conflict in Iran. Not happy at all. Okay, so you've got to deal with Russia. You've got to deal with them in the future, or you're going to be, pardon my French, shit out of luck with regard to your economies. You're already staggering from what we did to Nord Stream. What we did to Nord Stream—you're already being punished for that. Europe's got to figure itself out. It's got to sort itself out. And one of the things it has to do is realize it can't trust Donald Trump any more than Putin can, any more than anyone in Iran can, any more than anyone in the world can. That's the reality of the United States of America today. No one can trust us.

#Nima

Larry, the Iranian parliament speaker said the Strait of Hormuz situation won't return to its pre-war status. They really want to change the whole game in the Middle East. It seems the Strait of Hormuz is giving them some kind of leverage they need. They didn't want it before—they didn't want to go that far—because there was no war, nothing happening. That's why they didn't try to do anything in the Strait of Hormuz. Right now, the situation has totally changed after the assassination of the Supreme Leader of Iran, and they feel the threat is on their doorstep. That's why they have to do something about it. How do you see Iran going forward in managing the Strait of Hormuz?

#Larry

I've been here and done that. I was one of the planners out at U.S. Pacific Command when we implemented Operation Earnest Will, where we re-flagged Kuwaiti tankers and escorted them

through these very waters, including the narrow North Channel and the South Channel of the passageway. The route big tankers go through is only a couple of miles wide. The north route, as I recall, is very close to the Iranian shore; the south route is farther out, but it's still interdictable. We had a significant problem then, even with our allies contributing their efforts, and we had a fairly substantial capability to sweep for mines ourselves—especially with helicopter-dragged nets and such. That was extremely difficult.

Bremerton—Bridgeton was the name of the MV, a big motor vessel, a civilian ship, that hit a mine almost immediately. The skipper was really angry with us because he'd hit a mine. And all of a sudden, everything changed in the world in terms of insurers and shippers. No one wanted to ship, no one wanted to insure, and rates went off the chart. We persevered. The Samuel B. Roberts, a U. S. Navy warship, hit a mine and almost sank. She had to limp back to Norfolk, as I recall, going about four knots across the Atlantic. We had another ship hit by Saddam Hussein, who fired Exocet missiles at it and hit it. And then, of course, we had the incident that caused Khomeini to say, "I'm throwing in the towel."

I can fight Iraq. I can beat Iraq. But I can't fight Iraq backed by the United States. That was the occasion when the Vincennes, a new Aegis cruiser, shot down an Iranian Airbus and killed 299 Iranian civilians. That's when Khomeini said that, threw in the towel, and accepted the UN resolution that ended that eight-year brutal war. Very different today. Difficult then—very difficult then. It cost us what I just described. We wound up sinking an Iranian destroyer, and we were going to drop a bomb down the second destroyer's stack, but Ronald Reagan, the president at the time, called us off because he thought we'd done enough damage.

In that particular instance, we succeeded in making the strait safe for ships to go through. But it cost us, and Iran didn't have anywhere near the capability it does today. And that capability isn't their navy or their air force—it's their ballistic missiles and drones. They can wreak havoc in that little narrow strip of water. They can wreak havoc across the entire Persian Gulf if they want to, including the so-called Forbidden Isle, as the Iranians sometimes call it—Karg, or Kharg, up there, about one-third the size of Manhattan. And that place, you probably know this, has been there for a long time.

Saddam Hussein tried to attack it. The UAE tried to attack it. They were unsuccessful. You can put ten tankers in there at the same time and refuel them all at once. It's a wonderful facility for the Iranians. The water is very deep there, which it isn't throughout the rest of the Persian Gulf, so that's a prime facility. If we try to take that with Marines or whatever—which is what I'm hearing, that we're going to land Marines there and try to take it—I pity those Marines. I pity that whole complex, because it'll probably be destroyed in many ways, after surviving so long with so many antagonists. We're going to come down and destroy it. You know, the poet—I forget his name now—but he calls it something like "the orphan pearl of the Gulf" in Persian.

I think it translates that way. And it's an extraordinary place when you think about the rest of the Gulf and Iran's capacity to move oil and such—and, for that matter, other peoples like India and

China who receive that oil. That all stops. West Texas Intermediate goes to \$200. It's already over \$100, I'm told. Brent Crude does the same thing. And we have shippers who want to ship, we have insurers who want to insure, and we're back to the Arab oil embargo, you may recall, from way back then. You were pretty young then. I couldn't even drive from Fort Monroe, Virginia, to Washington, D.C., because there was no fuel, no gas. We're back to that on an extended basis if we're not careful. And Trump has already depleted the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

He's now drawing it down even further to try to reduce oil prices. This isn't going to work. We're going to be in deep kimchi, as the Koreans would say—and so is the globe if we let this go on. If Iran is successful in keeping those countries it doesn't want trading from doing so, and lets through the ones it wants—like those servicing China—they can manage that. The question is, can we alone stop it? We can probably make it more difficult to stop the flow, but we're going to take significant casualties doing so. And back to your question: had the Europeans pitched in their minesweeping capability and other assets like that, it wouldn't have been quite so bad—but they're not going to.

#Nima

We know that the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln is far from the Iranian coast.

#Larry

Very far now—they've moved another 300 miles.

#Nima

And not just that—you know, the Gerald R. Ford is heading back to Greece. And while all of this is happening, you see Donald Trump forcing the Europeans to come into this trade. It shows that the war isn't going the way Trump wants it to.

#Larry

And they've seen the accuracy of these missiles—the point accuracy, like the one that hit the facility in Bahrain, right on top of it. They've seen the capability of this class, and they know there are a couple of classes of missiles left—Mach 3, Mach 4, even Mach 5—the hypervelocity missiles that you can't hit with anything. And they're very fearful of losing a carrier. You talk about putting Donald Trump on his back foot and making sure he gets impeached—take down an American carrier.

Conversely, though, the Iranians have to be thinking about this, because I've been impressed with their ability to think that way. We take out a carrier—5,000 Americans dead in one fell swoop. Will that make the American people change their minds about this war? Because right now, three-

quarters of the American people do not support it, and that number's growing every day—about a percentage point or so every week. That might swing the American people in a different direction. So I'd be very, very careful about doing that too, if I were Iran. But can they do it? You bet.

#Nima

Yeah. How's the situation with the Israeli defense system, Larry? We know they're getting it from two sides—from Iran and from Hezbollah.

#Larry

Yeah, and sometimes they're roughly coordinated at the same time—two hundred Hezbollah missiles come in, and, you know, an equivalent number, not quite as many but more devastating Iranian missiles, come in. It's bad. It's bad.

#Nima

And you see in the mainstream Israeli media, they're mostly talking about, "So what is the outcome of this war? What's the benefit of continuing this war?" They're asking that question now, which wasn't the case before.

#Larry

Right. They weren't dying. They weren't bleeding. They weren't scared to death. I mean, they're living their lives in underground shelters.

#Nima

Donald Trump is trying to bring Syria in—you know, Jolani, Al Jolani and his gang—to go against Hezbollah. Reuters reported that the United States is encouraging Syrian action against Hezbollah. Damascus is hesitant, you know, but... you bet.

#Larry

You bet. They've seen what happens to the Kurds when they throw their lot in with the empire. The idea that someone like Jolani—or the Kurds, for that matter, any one of the Kurdish groups—would join in now, given that they'd have Iran in front of them and Erdogan behind them? I don't think so. I don't think so. Erdogan's not going to watch something like that happen and not take action. I know he's been all mouth up to this point, but I think the Kurds just refused to do what Trump wanted them to do. And I can only sympathize and empathize with them, because they would have

had the Iranians in front of them with those new attack helicopters the Russians sent, and they would have had Erdogan behind them. Erdogan would love an opportunity to crush the Kurds in any of their components.

You know, Syrian Kurds, Iranian Kurds, or Iraqi Kurds. Although he gets along pretty well with Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, Mosul, and places like that now, because they've got a pretty good deal with oil and everything else. So Turkey doesn't mind the Kurds in northern Iraq much. Nor do the Kurds apparently mind Turkey much anymore. You know, Turkey used to send soldiers into that region periodically, all during the year, to kill people or capture them and take them back and torture them. And the Kurds sort of did the same thing back to Turkey across the border there. But they've been pretty peaceful, because they're both more or less content with the relationship they have now. But not true with the Iranian and the Syrian Kurds—it's a different ballgame.

#Nima

But the reality of these Syrians—the so-called HTS, the so-called Syrian president—he's the head of HTS, we know that. What's important, I think, for us to take into account is that these guys didn't fight the government, didn't fight the army, because the army collapsed. Without fighting, they captured Damascus. I don't know how capable they are of fighting for Damascus on the ground against Hezbollah. Hezbollah fighters—we know them—they've been training and fighting for such a long time. And these people, we don't know that much about their history or their training system in the West.

#Larry

I agree with you—they're an unknown factor in that regard, in that specific regard. Otherwise, I think they're pretty well known: they're al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other types. And one wonders if they really have had an epiphany and changed their mind, which leads me to say that you might get a development you'd really rue the day for creating if you pitched them at Hezbollah on the flank, as it were, while Israel was taking them on in the front—and all of a sudden they decided to join Hezbollah against you. Because that, to me, would be a very logical development. Very logical. I mean, after all, it's Muslims on one side and Jews on the other. And though there are modus vivendi that have developed in that regard, they don't necessarily stand up when you're killing Muslims in front of them. I don't care—Shia, Sunni, whatever. I mean, the death of Ali Khamenei has more or less demonstrated you can get unity in the Islamic world across sects if you do something as heinous as that.

#Nima

Yeah. Donald Trump feels that he can put an end to the conflict as soon as he decides to. But that's not the case when it comes to the Iranian government. They say they feel they have the most leverage with the continuation of the war. And here's what Donald Trump said about his time frame to open up this trade for them.

#Speaker 04

It won't be, I don't believe, too long. We're knocking the hell out of the coast—it's basically the coast and the water—and it won't be too long. The Middle Eastern states, including Israel, by the way, which has been terrific, have been helping us a lot. Yeah.

#Larry

That last statement was a lie. They are not helping us a lot. There are one or two of them, like that vassal, quisling Jordan, that are, you know, helping us. But even there, I'm told—I don't know this for a fact, but I'm told by a fairly reliable source—that the blow against the radar in Jordan was pretty significant and impressed a lot of people. Depressed them maybe is a better word. So they're thinking twice and thrice about doing anything. I don't think they've hit anything in Egypt yet—at least I haven't heard anything. And Egypt's kind of keeping its powder dry.

But that was a lie. And then the other aspect of what he conveyed there—that we're in control, we're devastating Iran, and it won't be very long before the straits open and everything will be flowing—is just bullshit. Trump bullshit. Now, whether he's making it up out of whole cloth, which he has a want to do, or he's being advised that way is undeterminable by me, at least at this point. I can't imagine anyone with any confidence is telling him he ought to be saying that. So I have to believe he's doing what Trump normally does—he's pulling it out of his rear end.

#Nima

You know, Larry, what's dangerous about Donald Trump is that somehow, when you listen to him, it seems like the guy is totally disconnected from reality. And he's trying to make things up, you know? I don't know—maybe he's receiving false information. And when it comes to the AI, he says all these people on the streets in Iran are AI, that they've produced AI pictures. You have to be totally, you know, disconnected from reality to argue that.

#Larry

He's very reminiscent, in general—not in specifics, but in general—of Biden toward the end of his last year, almost as if he's demented. Now, he has moments, like in these press conferences, where he's a little more in control of himself—both physically, his body physically, and his mouth—than he is at other times. I've seen him going to the plane and making comments, or coming from the plane

or the helicopter and making comments, where I wonder if somebody needs to grab him because he's going to collapse. He's going to fall over and die right there on the tarmac or on the grass, because he looks so disheveled and so uncontrolled and not really physically fit at all. I don't know how they get him pumped up for these things, like these press conferences where he seems to be able to handle himself.

Although sometimes there, as you've probably noticed, he looks like he's, you know, a baby or puking in his own lap. I'm told you don't want to be standing too close to him because it's putrid around him. I don't say that in a way to personally deride him; I'm just saying I'm not sure he's in control of all his faculties all the time, especially his mental faculties. But when he does gear it up—like for a press conference or something like that, or when he's meeting somebody important—he can utter things that are still utterly ridiculous. And it's just part of his modus operandi. That's who he is. He's a grifter. He lies for a living. He cheats for a living. He's deceitful for a living. That's what he is.

It takes me back to all those times I went to New York between his first campaign and this presidency. I'd ride in taxis—you always find out about people from taxi drivers. And in New York, it's especially that way because the city has a lot of foreigners driving taxis, people looking for their citizenship or a green card or something. Yes, but not like Washington, D.C. I've never ridden in a taxi in Washington, D.C. that wasn't driven by a Somali, a Pakistani, an Indian, or someone from another group. And lots of times they have PhDs from their own countries, and they can talk to you endlessly. In New York, you get New Yorkers much of the time, and I talked to them about Donald Trump. They hated his guts. They had no kind words for him. They said he was a swindler. They said he was a con man.

A couple of times, I was en route to Great Neck, and this very, very vocal taxi driver told me he was a mafioso—and that he knew he was a mafioso because his brother was. His brother had told him about Donald Trump meeting with members of the mafia. So Donald Trump is hated by New Yorkers who count—New Yorkers who are at that level where the work gets done in New York City. They hate his guts. So I knew immediately, from just that informal conversation and many trips to New York City, that he was not the kind of person you wanted to be president of the United States. And I've just had that confirmed a hundred thousand times again and again by his being president. He's a grifter. He's a mafioso. He's a gangster. That's who our president is, Nima. You don't have to go too far to realize that, because your man—I think preceding Lula—was too. Is too.

#Speaker 05

Yeah.

#Larry

He's a capitalist gangster, maybe—but so is Trump, a capitalist gangster. He's a predatory capitalist par excellence. He just specializes in real estate instead of banking. That's who our president is. Americans need to wake up.

#Nima

Larry, considering the war in Ukraine, the economic war with China since 2010, the new tariff war during the Trump administration, and now the growing conflict between Iran and the United States—the wars involving Russia, China, and finally Iran—here's the question: what is happening to this world? You know, there's a new article in the **Financial Times** titled "The Era of U.S. Dominance in Economic Warfare Is Over." It argues that Iran's actions in the Strait of Hormuz show the reality of multipolar economic warfare. For decades, the United States dominated sanctions and used financial pressure as a strategic weapon. Now, other powers, including Iran and China, can use similar tools in response to escalation. Is that picture accurate, in your opinion?

#Larry

I think it is, and I think it's just going to worsen for us—the American empire. You can see a composite example of this in the fact that—well, let me ask you a question. If you were asked, what is the most important country in the world today from an economic and security perspective to the empire, what country would you name?

#Nima

I'd say just one.

#Larry

Just one.

#Nima

It would be Russia.

#Larry

Okay, I'd say China. I'd say China because China is the one becoming a replacement for us. All right, so who did he just postpone—or even cancel—a meeting with? The leader of that country. And why? Because he's at war. That's what he said. Does that tell you something? You're at war with a country that presents no threat to the United States of America at all. And because of that war, you're

canceling a meeting with a man who means everything to the security of America. You don't need to say anything more than that. It's ridiculous. It's an evaluation of the situation in the world that makes you want to puke. It means our president has no idea what's going on.

Now, the way you should answer that, Nima, if you're a geopolitical, geostrategic genius, is to say, no, you don't understand the people behind Donald Trump. Maybe not Trump himself, but the people directing him realize what you just said. They're using Iran and the war there to try to get at China—to try to stop the most dangerous Belt and Road initiative China has going, the one running through Iran, up the Persian Gulf, and into the Caucasus. So this is the game—the great game back in action with new players, the most prominent of which is the United States, now making war on Iran not to make war on Iran, but to make war on China. I'll buy that, but I don't buy that this administration has the sense to know it.

Iran just has the disadvantage of being in the way. We're after China, really. I would buy that. If Donald Trump came out and told the American people that, I would buy that. I wouldn't necessarily buy the idea that going to war in Iran was the way to stop it. But I do understand the geostrategic purpose of taking on China if you believe they're antagonistic to your interests to the point you can't deal with them. See, that's where I differ. That's where George H. W. Bush differed. That's where even George W. Bush differed. They thought it was better to deal with China in the economic sphere—to compete with China there—than to go to war. That's not what Biden believes, and that's not what Trump believes, I don't think.

But I know the people behind him don't believe that. They think war with China is inevitable—best to take them on indirectly. The first theater they agreed on was Russia and Ukraine. That didn't work too well, so now they've shifted down to Iran. The active theater, though, is much bigger, because they're in Azerbaijan, they're in Armenia, they're in Georgia. They're in all the peripheral Russian countries they think will give Russia a hard time—trying to foment rebellion, trying to push new policies. They're in Georgia big time, in Tbilisi. But Iran is the active theater now—the southern flank, if you will, of China's Belt and Road initiative. They're trying to stop China. That makes sense. It just doesn't make sense the way we're dealing with it.

#Nima

There's something deeper happening in the United States. Even during the war in Ukraine, we learned from, for example, Scott Ritter, who was saying there are no real Russian analysts in the U. S. But in my opinion, when I saw what was happening with the conflict with Iran—and now the war against Iran—even those people who are partly Iranian, Iranian Americans, you know, people I know, and I don't want to name because they're not here to defend themselves—they don't know Iran, Larry.

#Larry

Scott, you know how I saw that most vividly? Are you familiar with Khosrow Semnani? He's an Iranian billionaire. I'm told he owns somewhere close to 95% of the nuclear waste business west of the Mississippi—mostly nuclear waste and related operations. He's a multibillionaire who lives in Salt Lake City. I met with him at a time when Trita Parsi and I were trying to convince the Iranian community in America—people we knew best, Khosrow being one of them—to help us get the JCPOA through. And I learned then, especially working with Trita, going up and down Orange County in California and other places where Iranian Americans with lots of money lived, that there was a very, very wide array of opinions and views.

Most of them did not want a war, but they wanted the regime gone. They were willing to do just about anything short of war to get rid of it—including, for some, backing the Mujahideen-e Khalq, the MEK, and supporting other dissident Iranian groups with money and so on. Khosrow, for example, was somewhere in the middle. He had a general license from OFAC at the Treasury Department to send a whole shipload of humanitarian supplies—food and everything else—to Iran once a year, and they approved it. I think it landed in Chabahar or Bandar Abbas, somewhere like that. It was offloaded, and, you know, Iranians got whatever they needed.

They got off that ship, and it included a whole array of medical supplies that Iran had trouble getting because of sanctions and that sort of thing. So he was doing that kind of work. But even he was of two minds about who he would support and what he would support to overthrow the regime. All of that is to say, what I found out—at least for my own understanding—was that none of them really had any idea what they were talking about in real terms. They were so disconnected from the Iran they had left, usually around '77, '78, or '79, and from the Iran that exists now—especially the Iran that emerged from the long, bitter war with Iraq.

They simply didn't understand it. They went back to the days of the Shah, or just after. So I don't know what to say about it, except that I'd tell you—don't take advice from any of those people. Don't take advice from any of them, except for the few we met who were genuinely for the Iranian people and said, essentially, if democracy or a better form of government is to come to Iran, the people themselves have to achieve it—not outsiders. There were quite a few who felt that way: dentists, doctors, and others, wealthy Iranian Americans who shared that view. And incidentally, they gave the most money to Trita.

#Nima

Larry, compared to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, the population in 2026 is about twice what it was back then. Food production in Iran today is roughly eight times what it was during that period—they're producing a lot more food now.

#Larry

Which is one reason they're running out of water.

#Nima

But when it comes to water, Larry, they're less than 2% dependent on desalination.

#Larry

Yeah, yeah. I knew that wasn't a big blow, but the thing I'm hearing from climate people—these are folks who are totally neutral in terms of who's running what and so forth—is that because of the way they do agriculture, they have these incredible reservoirs of water. They're not quite like our aquifers, but they're roughly the same in terms of providing water from deep underground. Because of their methods of agriculture, they've really drained those over the last 30 years. And they're looking at the potential for climate to really hit them hard, if it's not already. And this all has to do with, you know, the same thing we're doing in our country—just draining in order to raise crops, you know.

#Nima

But after all, Larry, what I wanted to say is that when I got back to Iran after more than 12 years, I saw a country that was economically stronger. The cities had totally transformed—they were much more beautiful, and everything was...

#Larry

Which is why this bombing is such a shame.

#Nima

Yeah.

#Larry

Yeah, historical sites—thousand-year-old, even older, historical sites. We're just bombing them.

#Nima

Many people don't understand that Iran was invaded during the First World War and the Second World War. It was invaded by foreign countries and occupiers. Right now, I criticize those who argue that Iran is weaker than before—that 10, 12, or 20 years ago Iran was much stronger. When I got back, I really felt that Iran is in a much stronger position now. That's why they feel so comfortable continuing the war. This confidence doesn't come from weakness; it comes from how confident they are in their own capabilities.

#Larry

I agree. And look at what we've done. We were talking about this yesterday—two people I used to teach with. One's a geologist and one's a historian. And the point we all agreed on was that what we've done, in essence, is create a country that, as you said, was growing more and more powerful in terms of its cohesiveness and its people every day, and we made it reach that point even earlier than it would have. We're going to regret that dearly, because they're going to fight us to the death. That's the wrong way we should have approached it. You know, another person—an anthropologist—said, "Look, I've been in and out of Iran for 30 years, and I'll tell you right now, the nascent movements among the Iranian people for a better government were going to triumph."

They were going to triumph. All you had to do was leave them alone—nurture them in any way you could that wasn't CIA-oriented or Mossad-oriented. "What do you mean by nurture?" Well, I mean if they ask for help with media, with newspapers or something like that, you offer them help. If they ask for help with farming, you offer them help. If they ask for emergency aid because of an earthquake, like the one they had in Bam in 2003, you offer them help. But you don't act like you want to change their regime. You let them do that, you know. I think that's right. I think that's right. That's not the way you approach other countries—Iran or any other country.

#Nima

Larry, before we wrap up, we know that the air defense system isn't working the way it did when the war started, and Israel is, somehow, in a desperate situation. Many people would argue that Israel may go—well, you know—nuclear. They may use nuclear bombs against Iran. They may go nuclear. And here's what Donald Trump said about Israel using nukes.

#Speaker 07

David Sachs said the other week that the U.S. should, quote, "declare victory and get out of the Iran war." He also warned that if the conflict escalates, Israel might contemplate using a nuclear weapon. Has he shared that assessment with you? Oh, yes.

#Speaker 04

Israel wouldn't do that. Israel would never do that. And yeah, there's a theory—you pound them to hell, then you just leave, and it'll take ten years for them to rebuild, nowhere near what they have now. I guess that's another theory. But we want it to end so that another president doesn't have to deal with it. Look, for forty-seven years, no president was willing to do what I'm doing. They should've done it a long time ago; it would've been a lot easier. No president wanted to do it.

#Nima

This is the same guy who said, "You're not going to get a new war in the Middle East with me." And now he's right in the middle of a new war with Iran. He says Israel's not going to—well, I think we have to go. Nobody would believe what Donald Trump is talking about.

#Larry

You know what I would have said to him right there, if I were in his face when he was saying that? I would have said, "Why do you think, Mr. President, forty-seven years of presidents didn't do it? Have you given that any thought? You're implying they were cowards. You're implying they didn't know what they were doing, whereas you do. You're implying that you're the smart one, and all those presidents over those forty-seven years—and I'll take you all the way back to Dwight Eisenhower if you'd like—you're implying they were stupid, or cowards, or both. You want me to believe that you're the smart one in what you're doing? Tell me, why do you think they didn't do it?" He'd be speechless. No—he'd make up a bunch of lies. But that's how stupid what he just said is.

Now, you could say, as you were just implying, you were smarter, Mr. President, when you were running for president, because you said this—and let me quote you. And you could quote him twenty or thirty times: "No more wars in the Middle East. No more this, no more that in the Middle East." How'd you change your mind, Mr. President? Why'd you change your mind? May I suggest the reason you changed your mind was the persuasiveness of that little shithead known as Bibi Netanyahu? Because he had so much money in your coffers, and because he knows a lot about you because of Epstein. The guy can't even lie well anymore. I mean, he never could lie really well at all, but he's just egregiously that way now. It's almost painful to hear him.

#Nima

Larry, have you ever thought about Israel using nuclear bombs against Iran—and what the reaction would be? What would the outcome of that be for Israel?

#Larry

I think we've got a wholly new scenario now, Nima, actually. Some of us have been giving this some really heavy thought. One bomb wouldn't really do a lot. So if you were militarily advising Netanyahu—and he has some military advisors like that—you'd say multiple weapons. You wouldn't just use one. One wouldn't really, in that big a country, unless you convinced yourself to drop it on Tehran or something like that. One hopes and prays that wouldn't happen. And that would be a war crime of unimaginable proportions. It would probably seal Netanyahu's doom before the court, if not elsewhere too. So if you were going to use them in a militarily effective way, you'd use more than one—perhaps a dozen or more.

And you'd use them in key areas where you knew the effect wouldn't be so damning for you in terms of the press afterward. And you'd know you were bringing yourself some kind of military

advantage or achievement—particularly knocking out ballistic missile sites or something like that. So our conclusion was, if you had good military advice, you wouldn't just upload a few, as they were doing in 1973, planning to drop them on the Egyptian Third Army—and the Russians, the Soviets at the time, and we got really concerned and weighed in on it. They would do it in a much more extensive way. We wouldn't have just one bomb going off; we'd have a dozen or so bombs going off. And then we asked ourselves, what would that mean?

That would really let the genie out of the bottle, because it would support those in this country— young people, for example—who don't know anything about the Manhattan Project, or about Japan, or any of the history of these weapons. They just think of them in technological terms. That would support their theory that we bought them, we pay for them—enormously we pay for them—so why can't we use them? You'd be opening an entirely new regime of warfare, in our view. You'd be saying to the world, "Oh, look, see, they were used there." We'd have horrible aftermaths, maybe— especially if they're airbursts instead of groundbursts, where you get lots of radiation. Think Chernobyl, for example—many Chernobyls. This would be a horrible development, a horrible development.

And yet it makes sense in that narrow way, from a military professional point of view. You wouldn't want to just use one, and you wouldn't want to use it on a city. You'd want to use them effectively in military terms, and you'd want to use lots of them. This is a horrible development to have happen. But I don't put it past Bibi—I don't put it past Bibi at all—especially if he thinks things are getting so dire that he has to deliver a hammer blow in order to change the correlation of forces, change the whole appearance of victory or defeat. I think I told you Haaretz had that headline, right? The headline said, all Iran has to do is not lose to win. Iran and the United States have to achieve a Trumpian victory to win. You know, they've got to achieve that kind of victory to win. So this is a bad situation.

#Nima

I think, Larry, from what I've heard from Iranian officials, they're considering that scenario as well. They've said they know how to respond. I don't know what that response would be. I don't know what they have in their army, in their arsenal.

#Larry

That fifth class of missiles.

#Nima

That last class of missiles—the ones that go at Mach 3 or Mach 4—and how Israel would survive that sort of attack, that could be, you know... And Dimona—if they attack Dimona—then it's not just about, you know, it's totally... the case is somehow so complicated if they go that far against Iran.

#Larry

Nima, I wouldn't be surprised at all if Israel has already dispersed its nuclear arsenal and not told anybody—not us or anyone else—probably just a very small group of Israelis who know they've done it. All you'd need would be a bomb shelter or two here and there, cordon them off, put up signs—“Do not enter,” “Forbidden zone,” whatever—which Israelis are really good at, and then store the bombs there. Or the missiles, whatever. I think they've actually developed a cruise-type missile they can fire from their submarines. Netanyahu has more or less admitted that on occasion, in sort of cavalier remarks, that he can also launch them from submarines. So I think it's probably true they've developed that capability. I don't think it's a true ballistic missile like we have—the Tridents or whatever. I think you've got to surface the submarine and fire it off the platform, kind of like a Tomahawk with a nuclear warhead.

#Nima

Because all Iran would need to do is hit Haifa and Tel Aviv.

#Larry

Doing a pretty good job of it right now. I mean, the scenes I've seen are pretty horrific. You know, they hit the oil facilities in Haifa. I don't even know if they're functional.

#Nima

Thank you. Thank you, Larry, for being with us today. I wish we had some good news to talk about.

#Larry

How are your kids?

#Nima

They're doing well. They're doing fine.

#Larry

Lisa, that's positive.

#Nima

Thank you, Larry.

#Larry

Tell Bolsonaro I said hello.

#Nima

See you on Friday.

#Larry

Yeah, take care. Larry and I, right?

#Nima

Yeah, exactly.

#Larry

See you then. See you. Bye-bye.