

Daniel Davis: U.S. Military Options & War Narrative Collapse

Lt. Col. Daniel Davis argues why opening the Strait of Hormuz, putting boots on the ground, or seizing Kharg Island are not feasible options. The US could invade Yemen to control the key strait to the Red Sea—Bab el-Mandeb. The resignation of Joe Kent indicates that the military options and war narratives are collapsing fast. Lt. Col. Davis is a 4x combat veteran, the recipient of the Ridenhour Prize for Truth-Telling, and is the host of the Daniel Davis Deep Dive YouTube channel. Daniel Davis Deep Dive: <https://www.youtube.com/@DanielDavisDeepDive/videos> Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glennDiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glennDiesen> Buy me a Coffee: buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back to the program. We're joined today by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Davis, a four-time combat veteran and the host of the very popular YouTube channel *Daniel Davis Deep Dive.* Thank you, as always, for coming back on the program. Always a pleasure to be here, Glenn. Thanks for having me back. So, Trump has declared victory over Iran, as it seems he might be planning to go home. Yet the Iranians show no indication that they're ready for Trump to essentially declare victory, go home, and end this. What do you see now as the aims or goals of the Iranians to end this war?

#Daniel Davis

Yeah, as far as I can tell, Iran has two primary objectives, and everything else centers around those two. Number one is to survive. They have to continue to endure politically and maintain military viability. They don't have to be on par with the United States or be able to defeat the United States militarily. They just have to remain viable, which means sustaining some level of missile and drone capability and continuing to attack either some of our assets in the region or Israeli assets to stay relevant. Politically, they have to keep surviving these assassination attempts that keep coming. Some have succeeded, and more will certainly follow. So they've got to maintain political control — that means control of their armed forces, the IRGC, the police, and the regular army.

As long as they maintain that for some extended period of time, they can live to fight another day. Time is actually going to hurt them, for sure — the longer this goes, the more they're going to be hurt. But if time is on anybody's side, it's more on Iran's than on the United States'. We have a much greater sense of urgency than the Iranians do. They just have to say, "Even if this goes on for

months, we just have to keep enduring it.” But the United States is on a much tighter timeline because of the number two issue the Iranians have — and that is keeping the Strait of Hormuz closed. They have many ways to do that. It’s not just sea mines, or missiles, or drones, but also some of these speedboats and drone boats they use.

Some of their submarines, some of their underwater torpedoes — underwater missiles, as some call them — they have a lot of different assets, many things they can use to keep that closed. The longer they keep it closed, the more pressure gets put on the Trump administration, because the price of oil is still hovering around \$100. But if it doesn’t open really soon, that’s going to start going back up again. It already went from about 67 up to 97, I think, just before we came on here. So that’s a pretty good stat, but it’s kind of been hovering there for a while.

Well, that hovering is going to end if President Trump’s efforts to end the war, or else clear the strait, don’t succeed. Because that economy — both the United States and our allies — is going to start suffering. And that’s where the pressure is more on Trump for a quick end than it is on the Iranian side, because they basically have to say, “All right, we’re going to endure all of these missiles you keep striking us with, all of these people you keep killing and assassinating. We just have to hang on.” And that’s a lot lower level of something to give, whereas the United States has to say, “We are going to destroy your government. We are going to destroy your IRGC. We have effectively destroyed the bulk of your navy.” Though, importantly, not all of their — in fact, not even a majority of the boats that matter the most, which were the speedboats and the drones. So we actually haven’t gotten those, but we have destroyed a lot of the surface fleet and, of course, their air force — but not their missile force. We have eliminated a lot of their launchers and a lot of their launch sites.

#Daniel Davis

But they have so many more spread around the country, and they clearly continue to be viable that way. So it’s a process of trying to make the Iranians capitulate while trying to end the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz. And so far, the U.S. has been unsuccessful in doing that.

#Glenn

Well, when you argue that time is on Iran’s side, I guess one can see that — the U.S. will begin to struggle with weapon shortages, problems with logistics, its bases being weakened. And of course, the Gulf states would also grow weary, as would the economy, primarily because of the energy crisis. But what do you see as the challenges on the non-material side? That is, well, I wouldn’t say regime change for Trump, but he’s going to face a lot of political hardship at home.

I saw just today that Joe Kent, who was appointed by Trump as the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, has resigned. He referred to the war on Iran, saying there was no immediate threat from Iran, and he essentially blamed the Israeli lobby for it. Also, America’s closest allies are all sitting this one out, not wanting to join in on this plan to open the Strait of Hormuz. Do

you think this is significant in Iran's calculations — and could it contribute to the political undoing of President Trump?

#Daniel Davis

Well, yeah, this is part of that time pressure — that clock. I'm saying that time is more on the Iranian side. They don't have any of those issues, at least not of that nature, because they're all in this together. Even the people who were against the regime have now either gone to ground or are actually working together to solidify it, because they're saying, "Listen, this is against the Iranian nation. It's not just against the ruling government." This idea that Israel and the United States are trying to set the protesters free and bring democracy — I don't think anybody on the ground believes that. I think they see it as an attempt to destroy the Iranian state.

And because that's what they believe, that's what they're acting on — meaning they're not going to fall apart; they're actually going to coalesce, rally around the flag, as we call it. Trump, on the other hand, has got some big problems. I mean, he can't get the allies together because every single one of them has said, "No, we're not going to impale ourselves by sending our ships to near-certain destruction to try and open something." All those things I told you about — the assets the Iranians have to keep the straits shut — that's not something you're going to solve by just sending in a few naval vessels.

In fact, all you're going to be is a big target for any number of those assets the Iranians have — and they have quite a few of them, and they're obviously quite lethal, as we've seen. A number of ships have already burned, and nobody wants to be next. I saw the former vice chief of staff of NATO talking earlier today — or maybe it was yesterday; I saw it this morning — where he said, "Listen, you're asking us the equivalent of booking passage on the Titanic after it's already struck an iceberg. It's going down. Nobody's going to get on board with that." So everybody has said no. That puts pressure on Trump.

And, of course, then he comes out this morning on Truth Social and says, "Oh yeah? Well, I don't need you guys anyway. Forget you. We're the most powerful nation on the planet, and we don't even want your help anymore." And, of course, it sounds like a petulant child. I'm sure it's being received that way, because the other countries — whether you're talking about Japan, South Korea, France, the UK, and so on — are going, "OK, if you want to rant, that's fine, but we're definitely not going to send our ships and our men out there to die on a mission that won't succeed." So that puts pressure on him.

And now you talk about this morning with Joe Kent, who was the number two person at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, second only to Tulsi Gabbard. He resigned, and he was pretty strong in his denunciation of this. He said that President Trump was lied to — that the Israelis lied to him, that the American media participated in a misinformation campaign, which means it was intentional, to try to create the belief that there was an imminent threat when there was no

imminent threat. And, you know, unfortunately, President Trump goes out around noon, when he was talking with the leader of Ireland in the Oval Office, and he says, "Oh, well, he was a good guy, I guess."

But I'm glad he's gone, because he said there was no threat from Iran. And, you know, I don't want somebody like that on my staff. Well, of course, that's not what he said. He didn't say there was no threat — he said there was no imminent threat, which is all the difference in the world. And he also didn't — President Trump didn't address the Israeli part of that. You and I have talked about that before. It's self-evident, very strong in that regard. Definitely, they're the ones that wanted this war, and they did everything they could to coerce President Trump into it — or trick him into it, I don't even know. I mean, it could be any number of ways. All we do know is that they did a lot to influence him, and it succeeded, because there are no American interests engaged here. That's one of the things Joe Kent put in that letter.

He also said this is definitely not "America First," because we weren't facing any threat at all. So to go to war — against the Constitution, against international law, against U.S. law — when we were not threatened, you can only ask the question: who benefits from this? And it's the people who've been begging America to go to war against Iran for many years. Of course, that's Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. All of that together puts pressure on Trump, because if he can't break this militarily, if he can't break it diplomatically, and if the Iranian people keep saying, "Even if you keep killing us all, we're not going to give in, and we're not going to release our grip on the chokehold of the Strait of Hormuz," then President Trump is in a real bind — because that number is going to start going up.

And you mentioned the Gulf allies. It's not just that the price of oil is going up because things aren't getting into the Gulf either. That means the things these Gulf countries need to survive — food, water, other products — aren't getting through, and they're also not making any money because they're losing money hand over fist. So if they don't have the funds to sustain themselves, in addition to the strikes they're receiving from Iran periodically, then they can't keep this up for long either. They're also going to put pressure on Trump. So he has the absence of support from our European allies, and the presence of pressure on him from our Arab allies.

And now he has discontinuity within the United States itself. Look, if this goes much longer — a month or two, say — and you can't keep a cap on that price, and oil and gasoline prices keep going up, that means everything goes up in America. And that means everybody will start paying a price for this. I promise you, they are not going to be looking kindly on the president. When his war of choice is costing every American, that's when even his supporters are going to start jumping ship and putting pressure on him from the inside. That's why I say the time pressure is on Trump more than on Iran.

#Glenn

Well, what do you think they're discussing in the White House in terms of military solutions to end this? Is it simply intensifying the attacks on Iran? Do you think it's realistic to have boots on the ground? Can they actually, with military force, open the Strait of Hormuz? And also, we hear about these Marines coming down, and based on the numbers, it doesn't seem clear what they're for. I was wondering if there might be a further expansion — some effort to control parts of eastern or western Yemen — because so far, Saudi Arabia is staying afloat thanks to its access to the Red Sea. If the Houthis in Yemen were to close the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, it would be game over for them as well. So do you think there could be some kind of preemptive invasion of Yemen? It's very hard to see what the military solution would be here, or what kind of planning is even feasible.

#Daniel Davis

Yeah, that's something in Yemen — to try and keep that second strait open that you're referring to. That's probably the most feasible thing that can be done. And a part of me thinks — actually, an increasing part of me thinks — that all this focus on Kharg Island is basically a disinformation campaign. Because I'm thinking, you're not going to send that MEU along with its escort ships there. I mean, it's impossible. You're not going to get through the Gulf of Oman, through the Strait, through the Persian Gulf, get all the way up to the northern part of that, and then have any prayer with this one battle group to actually take Kharg Island.

I mean, it's just impossible. You'd have to go through this gauntlet of hundreds of miles of Iranian shoreline, and of course all the missiles—everything—would be shooting at it. So I don't even think that's possible. I don't even think that's the intent, because our leaders aren't suicidal and they're not stupid. But I think by telling everybody they're going here, maybe they swing down there and try to preemptively take something like that. I mean, that's theoretically possible—that maybe a force that size, if it comes in as a surprise, could succeed in taking it. But that's not going to help you any.

I mean, what are you going to get for taking that? It's not like Yemen is restricted to one point on a map where they could launch an attack. They'll launch missiles from anywhere. They'll launch drones from anywhere. That's not going to keep it open if that's what it comes down to—if Yemen decides, or the Houthis decide, that's what they want to do. So anything else makes even less sense. I don't know. I fear this is just grasping at straws, because you ask, what are they talking about? Maybe in the Pentagon, or, you know, behind closed doors in the Situation Room at the White House.

I mean, I think they've got to be pulling their hair out, because I can't identify any viable military options that would solve the problem of the Strait of Hormuz being shut down. They have, like I said, underwater missiles, torpedoes, submarines. They've got the fast attack craft, the surface drones, the aerial drones, the missiles, rockets, and even long-range artillery that could be brought in. You can't take all of that out—you just can't. There's too much of it. And short of that, they might say, "Well, let's just keep assassinating leaders."

That's not going to work either. The country is too big. I mean, you still have the president—he hasn't been taking that. He was walking out in the open just the other day, in defiance of all this. Allegedly, they took out Ali Larijani, who was a major figure. And if that turns out to be true, that'll be a major setback for Iran. But it's just a setback—they'll replace him and move on with somebody else. I mean, their armed forces are about half a million active troops, and they could get—oh, I'm sorry, yeah—and they could get up to a full million if they bring in all the Basij and all these other people. They have no shortage of manpower to replace those who are lost. I mean, they're prepared to do that. That's what happens in a war.

So we don't have enough ordnance to bomb them literally into the Stone Age. And every time that's been tried in history, people endure it. They keep replacing losses, and they don't fall. We don't have enough bombs for that. We're already low. I think the *Gerald R. Ford* is about to start steaming home, if it hasn't already, because it was worn out from the Venezuela operation before. Apparently, there was a big fire on board—not enemy fire—but they had a fire that limited its capabilities. A lot of their crew are now sleeping, I'm told, on cots in the hallways because many of their compartments were damaged. Now, apparently, the *George W. Bush* is coming in, but then you have the same issue.

Now then, how do you sustain a rate of fire on a mission that's not succeeding? Because I'm telling you, the leaders in the Pentagon—the senior general, General Kane, the chief of the Air Force, the chief of staff of the Army, and so on—all these guys in the Marine Corps, they're going to be saying, "Look, we can do this mission. If you give us the order, we'll keep dropping bombs. The Air Force will keep shooting missiles." But toward what end? Because if you're not going to cause them to capitulate, all you're doing is emptying our coffers.

Because I'm telling you, we are firing missiles and dropping munitions at a far higher rate than we can produce them, which means that, by definition, we're depleting the arsenals in our inventories—the ones we'd need if we suddenly found ourselves in another war somewhere, for our own national security. So hopefully President Trump won't be so foolish as to say, "No, just keep pouring it on until I tell you to stop," and in doing so put at risk our global requirements, our global defense responsibilities everywhere else, even including the homeland. I mean, it could get that serious if it goes on long enough. So we're in a real problem here.

#Glenn

Are these more or less the weapons being used now—the ammunition being used against Iran? Is this more or less the same equipment that would otherwise have gone to Ukraine? I guess the Patriots are a good example, obviously, but the rest of the weapons—are they similar, or is it a different part of the inventory?

#Daniel Davis

Most of it's different. Obviously, the air defense interceptors—that's what Volodymyr Zelensky is most interested in, what he's been trying to get and now what he's not going to get. So if he thought he was going to get more of those, he's obviously going to be disappointed. We don't have them. We don't have them to give. But a lot of these other ones, like the JDAMs and so on, are fired from American aircraft that they don't have, other than the F-16—and they have limited numbers of those. So that's not something I think we've given in large numbers. But, you know, even those are starting to go down now. And obviously our Tomahawk cruise missiles—though I don't think we ever gave those to Ukraine.

I mean, we used about 400 in the first 36 hours. I don't know how many we've used since then, but that was a pretty big hit, because the replacement rate is a lot lower than that. So that means we've already cut into those reserves as well. Now you're limited to so-called dumb bombs or some of the other air-to-ground missiles we still have pretty good-sized inventories of. But if you keep doing this thing where you just keep pouring it on them, trying to blow stuff up and hoping that pressures them enough, you can see you're going to start running low—and eventually run out of those too—if you don't do something different.

#Glenn

And the boots on the ground we hear about—how feasible is this? I mean, is this meant to be on Iranian territory? Because, you know, the Strait of Hormuz has a very long coastline, mountainous, and populated by more than 90 million people. How realistic do you think that is? What exactly would that mission be—to occupy the territory along the entire Iranian coastline? What are we actually looking at here? And how quickly could that be done?

#Daniel Davis

It would take at least half a year just to assemble the force, get people trained, equipped, and ready to go, because we're starting flat-footed. No one's there right now. We don't have a force that big. Our entire active-duty Army and Marine Corps together probably total about 475,000 active troops—and that includes everyone, not just fighters. You'd need an army of somewhere around 400,000 to 500,000 just to start asking whether this is even a realistic possibility. But even that wouldn't work, because where would you come in?

If you look at a topographical map of Iran, they have this nearly impregnable situation—a series of mountain ranges covering their entire western side. Anywhere you'd go in, whether it's from Iraq, somewhere up in the Kurdistan areas, and so on—maybe even if somehow you could theoretically get Turkey to allow us, which I can't even imagine them doing—there's nowhere you can enter and start maneuvering toward the capital city. I mean, where would you even go? Seriously, if you look at that topographical map, it would be suicide, because that gives every advantage in the world to the defense. And even if, let's say, the quality of their soldiers was about a fifth of ours—I doubt it's that far off, but maybe it is.

But when you put them in a defensive position like that, on their home soil, where they know the terrain and know we're coming in—going into that—the best analogy I can give is the fighting up the boot of Italy during World War Two, in that mountainous terrain. It was just a bloody fight, a very slow slog, with high-casualty areas like that. And that was with two big armies, in the millions. If you take our troops now—flat-footed, not prepared—and try to send them in on the ground there, we'd just get chewed up. I mean, we wouldn't even make it through the mountains. They'd be able to choose where to hit us, and even if they suffered a lot of casualties themselves, they've got the numbers.

They have people who would fight to the death on their home soil, and they'd eventually just chew us up. And now that we've weakened our own army, we'd literally be risking destroying it—trying to impale ourselves there to fight a war that can't be won. So, in my view, I don't think there's any general in an American uniform today who would willingly do that, even if ordered. I think you'd see, like Joe Kent, a lot of them saying, "I can't, in good conscience, do that—it's suicide. I will not lead people into certain death. You'll have to find somebody else or change the mission." I think that's what would happen.

So you can just take that off the table. It won't work, even if people tried to execute it. So then that leaves air power. Well, we're doing that now, and we're proving that's not going to work. Naval power has already done the maximum it can. None of that is going to cause Iran to open up that strait. So I think we have a militarily unattainable situation, and President Trump will be forced—whether he wants to or not—to have some kind of negotiated settlement that's now going to be acceptable to the Iranian side. And now, because of our foolishness, they actually have leverage where they never did before.

#Glenn

So, last question: how will this war affect U.S.-Israeli relations? Because if it were a quick war—in and out—you'd think the U.S. and Israeli objectives would be very closely aligned. However, in a long war that drags out, you can see how it could be in Israel's interest to weaken Iran over time—economically, militarily, politically, whatever it may be. But in a long war, it seems this goes very much against U.S. interests, especially given the objectives laid out in the national security strategy to pivot away from this region. So how do you see it? I mean, is there any growing tension now between the U.S. and Israel—if not at the political level, then maybe at a lower level? How do you see that?

#Daniel Davis

Yes. I'm just thinking about your statement. Right. And that's where I was going to go now—to people like me and some of my colleagues. I mean, we've been beating these drums for a long time, saying that this is in Israel's interest only, not ours. We're being dragged into their war. But at the

public level, there has been a reduction in the number of people and the amount of support for Israel among some constituencies. Among others, it hasn't diminished at all—it still remains very strong. But now, because of this Joe Kent letter, where he so explicitly said the quiet part out loud—that it was Israeli manipulation of President Trump and that our interests were not involved, that this was not “America First”—he's an eleven-time combat veteran. It's going to be a lot harder to dismiss him than a lot of these other people.

And now, when you see—as of, I think, Sunday night—we've already suffered, in the United States, about 200 wounded to some degree or another, and 13 killed that we know of so far. That's going to continue as this starts to expand. And that was after, I think, 17 days at the time. That's a pretty high number of people who've been hit, wounded, or killed in a war that's not of our making. Americans are not going to be cool with a lot of casualties that aren't even related to our national security. And now that this is out—because it's going to be in the mainstream media—people are going to be forced to actually consider what he said. And if the days start turning into weeks, and the weeks into months, President Trump might not be able to get himself out of this.

We've suffered casualties. The cost to the American people is now across the board—everybody's paying more for everything, and there's financial pain for everyone. People are going to start looking even harder at that. That's when we might start seeing some meaningful degradation in the support. And then Trump may come under pressure to actually start putting that at a distance. It hasn't happened yet, but I think that day is coming.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, when you see people like Joe Kent quitting or resigning, even though he was picked by Trump over this, yeah, I think it causes a stir. But then some of the responses coming from the White House—for example, Caroline Leavitt, I'm not sure if I'm saying that right, the spokesperson for the White House—she came out and said, well, Ben Shapiro thinks this was a brave war by the president. I mean, the optics of this... I haven't seen anything like it.

#Daniel Davis

That's a strange thing to say, man.

#Glenn

Yeah, of all people. No, but it's kind of, you know—it's like you get a spokesperson for Israel.

#Daniel Davis

You have Ben Shapiro, who has a microphone and talks a lot. And you have Joe Kent, an eleven-time combat veteran who, by the way, lost his wife in action in the Iraq War and has served this

country with great distinction. So who are you going to believe between those two? I mean, I'm just asking. That's a question I'd ask any of those people. I'd ask Caroline Leavitt.

#Glenn

It's not good optics at all. Yeah. Anyway, thank you very much for taking the time.

#Daniel Davis

Sorry about that. Thanks for having me on—I appreciate it.