

Larry Johnson & Col. Wilkerson: Second F-35 Down - Iran War Spirals

#Nima

Hi everybody, today is Friday, March 20th, 2026, and our dear friends Larry Johnson and Col. Wilkerson are back with us. Welcome back.

#Larry

Glad to be with you. We survived another week.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Today is a very special day. It's a new year — as we call it in Iran, Nowruz, the new year. And the other thing is that the last day of Ramadan is Eid al-Fitr, when the fasting comes to an end. It's important for Muslims, it's important for Iranians, and today is a good day. But unfortunately, the war is raging on. Exactly, exactly. It's just making everything so difficult right now. Let me start, Larry, with you. Yesterday we had Donald Trump talking about the current situation with the war against Iran. He was describing the situation of the American army against Iran. Here's what he said — it was yesterday at 12 p.m.

#Speaker 03

Just about everything there is obliterated, including their leadership. Their Navy's gone, their Air Force is gone, their anti-aircraft equipment is gone. We're flying wherever we want, Pete. We don't even have anybody shooting at us.

#Nima

And at 4 p.m. yesterday, we learned that the Iranian air defense system hit an F-35 fighter jet, and they released footage of it, which was later reported by CNN. Do you believe, Larry, that Donald Trump is receiving false information? Because somehow it sounds so delusional, the way he's talking about the battle. It seems like everything is over, that they have nothing left to fight back with. Or is he trying to make his case to show how powerful he is and that he has total dominance over what's going on?

#Larry

Well, I'm not a physician. I did work as a respiratory therapy technician my way through high school, so I have some familiarity with medicine. Donald Trump is crazy—I mean, he's demented. I don't say that as an insult; I mean it as a medical condition. He has exhibited confabulation over the course of the last, you know, 15 or 16 months while in office. Confabulation is when you say something that is objectively false, yet you believe it's true. So it's not like, you know, he says, "Oh, we've obliterated the army, they don't have any more Navy, they don't have any more Air Force," and then in the next breath says, "But boy, we need the NATO navies to come with us to open the Strait of Hormuz."

Because essentially, we can't do it ourselves. Well, wait a second—if they're obliterated, if they're 100% defeated, just go in and take over. It's done. It's over. So his brain isn't even able to reconcile such glaring contradictions. What bothers me is that the press sits around and accepts this crap without pushing back and saying, "Hey, you can't keep saying one thing and meaning another." I mean, it's like that opening scene from the movie **Amadeus**, when you're walking into the insane asylum and seeing all these crazy people to get to Salieri, who's also crazy. Trump is disconnected from reality and is dangerous. And nobody's tackling him or stopping him from doing it.

#Lawrence

Let me pick up on what Larry just said in one aspect—and I agree with everything he said. That aspect is the journalist. Next door to me lives, and I won't name him, but a man who's had the White House beat several times, each six-month period. He works for Al Jazeera, and I like him. He's a good guy. He debriefs me sometimes. But when he goes into the White House press pool, as it were, sitting there asking questions, I want to ask him—desperately. I haven't so far, but I want to, because he's a friend.

But I put this question to all those people: what's wrong with you? And you know what they'll tell you—because I've said that to two or three, not him, but two or three—and they say back, "Well, we'll get kicked out of the pool." So what? All of you get up and walk out. What do you think that would do to the White House press? Get up, all of you, and walk out. Every time he starts to lie, get up and walk out. Forget it. Don't give him any coverage. But you'll never get them to do that, partly because at least a third of them are owned by Israel.

#Nima

Col. Wilkerson, there's something deeper than that. It's not just about Donald Trump himself. We had Stephen Miller go on Fox News saying the same thing. And here's what Scott Besson said, who's supposed to be some sort of brain in the administration. Here's what he said.

#Speaker 05

Maria, you know, for the regime, we're back to the stuff of Baghdad Bob here. The regime is in collapse, and the people are starting to turn against them. We're starting to see defections at

Treasury. We now know where the Iranian leadership's bank accounts are, and those are being frozen. We'll hold them and see who comes forward in terms of defections. But we're starting to see defections throughout the regime, and that's how this ends. So, you know, the idea of some tolling arrangement—

It's ridiculous what President Trump is talking about. And to be clear, he has focused on Kharg Island since 1988, before the Shah fell, saying the U.S. should be focused on that. He is laser-focused on it. As I said, there was a bombing campaign last week—the military assets on Kharg Island were destroyed. And the other thing I can tell you is, if you're an oil worker, you don't want to work there. All the oil workers are being coerced to stay there. And, you know, we'll see what happens—whether that eventually becomes a U.S. asset.

#Lawrence

He just used a previous comment that I'm not aware of, but I'm sure I know the general content of it about Kharg Island. That is, as he just presented it, a total lie. In 1988, Kharg Island was being attacked by Saddam Hussein because it was the end of the Iran-Iraq War—a bloody war. And we sortied forth to reflag Kuwaiti tankers, and you know that story. We didn't do too good a job even then, when we had massive naval superiority in clearing the Gulf, because the Bridgeton hit a mine right away. The Samuel B. Roberts hit a mine and had to limp back to Norfolk at four knots. We had a real problem even then, and we were massively more powerful—especially Navy-wise—than we are now. And Saddam Hussein and the UAE, too, because it started about '66, and it had been pressed by a number of countries in the region for a long time.

Granted, they don't have the capability we do, but they never could get to it or do anything really bad to it. Now, if we're going to do something bad to it, Nima, this place is about a third the size of Manhattan. It's called the Forbidden Isle in Persian terms. It's absolutely pristine—the depth of the water and everything—unlike any other place in the Gulf. It can refuel, or fuel, at the same time, tens of supertankers. So it's absolutely essential: if you take that whole facility out, Putin will go from \$150 million a day to \$300 million a day. And the price of oil will go up significantly, too. And we know that. So Besant's lying through his teeth if he says we're going to get on there with, whatever, ground troops.

I fear for those Marines—half of their Ospreys will crash en route. But if we're going to get on there and destroy that, we've got to think really hard about how we're going to replace the throughput capacity that represents for the world oil market. And that's true of this whole game we're playing with oil. Unless we've got the oil to replace all of what we're going to eliminate—and maybe for an extended period of time—if we take someplace like Kharg Island and destroy the facilities there. Of course, you've got to destroy the pipes coming into it, too. We're playing with global chaos. And we've already started that, so why am I even saying it? Trump doesn't have any idea what he's doing.

#Nima

Larry, what's your understanding? They're sending Marines, they're sending forces—it seems like they're sending them to Kharg Island. I don't know of any other place; they're not going to be able to get close to the Strait of Hormuz. That's why many people are assuming they're going to attack Kharg Island. Netanyahu was talking the same way yesterday—he said a ground invasion would be inevitable. And it seems the Israelis are advocating for that as well. It's not just about the Trump administration. What do you make of it?

#Larry

I don't even know what they mean by a ground invasion. So let's start with Kharg Island. And Col. Wilkerson mentioned the possibility of Marines flying there in Ospreys. Well, the MEU—the Marine Expeditionary Unit—that's en route with 2,200 Marines. Let's just do the math: an Osprey can carry 24 Marines with combat loads. Okay, let's see.

#Lawrence

If it flies.

#Larry

Yeah, if it flies. Well, look, if we've got ten Ospreys, that's 240. That's only about one-tenth of the unit. And, you know, maybe they're going to have to make multiple trips. Maybe if we had a hundred Ospreys—which we don't—you could have them all fly at once. So, number one, the Marines can't get to Kharg without running the gauntlet in the Strait of Hormuz, which means the ship would be sunk. So the Marines won't get there that way. But what I'm hearing is that they're likely going to try to land them somewhere right around the strait, on the Iranian shore. Now, the MEU comes equipped to last fifteen days in theory without being resupplied—but that's assuming optimal conditions, that they're not facing missile fire, drone fire, and so on.

Again, you're going to plan a military operation to accomplish certain objectives. Now, what might that objective be? To secure the shore of Iran right there on the Gulf? No. Sorry, that's hundreds of miles long. Two thousand two hundred Marines don't cover a shoreline that's hundreds of miles long. And it's not like there's just one specific location where Iran has its missiles hidden in caves and guns—artillery pieces capable of firing into the Gulf. Not to mention the underwater drones and submarines. I mean, Iran has a large array of options. So it's not even clear what the military mission is.

Now, I've also speculated that maybe they're going to use the Marines as a diversion while they try to launch a special operations unit to attack one of the hardened, deeply buried targets, hoping to recover enriched uranium. That could be on the table. But I was specifically involved with that

exercise twenty years ago, and at the hot wash—after you do the exercise and evaluate it—the lesson learned was: don't do it. So I don't know if we've learned that lesson, but that was the conclusion that came out of that exercise. You know, I think people are making military decisions who don't understand a damn thing about military capabilities, logistics, and operations.

#Lawrence

I couldn't agree with that more. You know, when Ahmadinejad told me in New York City at the UNGA that Iran had 1,875 nautical miles of coastline on the Persian Gulf and the United States had none—so who was the culprit in terms of incidents at sea? I went and got my maps out. Got them right there on the floor right now. Larry's right—about a thousand of those miles are on the eastern side. By the way, that's where Parmenion brought his craft up to resupply Alexander the Great. Alexander almost died because Parmenion ran into such rough conditions in the Gulf, even with his boats, that he couldn't supply Alexander. And that's very rough terrain, as Larry was saying. Where are you going to put these Marines ashore in a traditional amphibious landing? You know, where are you going to put them ashore? Bandar Abbas? Chabahar? On the wharfs? On the beach? They're going to be dead.

And also, the amphibious bottom bringing them close enough to make an amphibious assault is going to be dead. That little thing everybody's calling a carrier—it isn't a carrier. It's an amphibious assault ship, and it's got airplanes on it. They can support the Marines going ashore, but where are they going to go? I've done the study, the analysis of this sort of thing for PACOM years ago. We did it because we thought we were going to be fighting the Russians coming down from Afghanistan. We couldn't understand why they were in Afghanistan. We weren't doing the political business; we were just doing the military business. And we knew they wanted a warm-water port. So we were planning for fighting them in Iran—planning for them trying to come down around Chabahar, Bandar Abbas, that area. I know that terrain. Good luck, Donald Trump. Good luck, Marines. Yeah.

#Nima

Larry, the escalation is hitting the oil and gas facilities. Yesterday, Iran struck in response to what Israel did to South Pars, which is one of the main facilities in Iran. They've responded by attacking Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, and Haifa. The attack on Qatar, you know, knocked out about 20% of their LNG capacity. And Donald Trump—what we've heard from sources, from Axios, Tom Barrack, and Barak Ravid—he said the Americans and Israelis coordinated before this attack. Then Donald Trump came out and said he had nothing to do with what happened. What's the real story? Because we've seen this before with the attack on Doha—Donald Trump came out and said he didn't know about it. What's your understanding of that?

#Larry

Yeah, both are true. It's likely Trump wasn't asked—nobody said, "Hey, we want your permission to do X, Y, and Z"—because he'd already signed off on the execute orders. So the Navy and Air Force have complete authority to act, unless they go against the rules of engagement contained in that execution order. But Barak is right that the U.S., you know, the Combined Air Operations Center—the CAOC—which used to be based at Al Udeid, I don't think it's still there, simply because it's taken so much fire from Iran that they've had to move to a more secure location, perhaps Incirlik. But that CAOC monitors every single aircraft—or at least they used to, when they had all the radars up—that takes off and lands.

Right now, they've got sort of a workaround. They're using AWACS—so AWACS are in the air, providing some of the coverage that used to come from those ground radars that were destroyed. But the U.S. commanders absolutely knew where the Israelis were headed. And Iran had made it very clear: if you hit us here, we're going to hit you there. It was tit for tat—and that's exactly what happened. By blowing these up, they're extending the time the world's oil, LNG, and fertilizer shortages will last. There's no quick solution on the horizon.

And I want to remind people of the bragging that Donald Trump did during the State of the Union address on February 24th. This was just four days before he launched the attack on Iran. He said gasoline, which had reached a peak of over \$6 a gallon in some states under his predecessor—it was, quite honestly, a disaster—was now below \$2.30 a gallon in most states, and in some places \$1.99 a gallon. And when he visited the great state of Iowa just a few weeks earlier, he even saw \$1.85 a gallon for gasoline, the lowest in four years and falling fast. Well, that didn't age very well. I noticed that where I live, on February 28th, the gas price was \$2.54. It's now up a full dollar—\$3.54—and it's going to keep rising.

#Larry

And Trump can't go back and pretend he had nothing to do with this.

#Lawrence

This is all a result of his actions.

#Larry

And yet, once again, you don't see anybody in the press calling him out, holding him accountable, asking him the question: hey, what happened to those low gas prices you were promising?

#Lawrence

It's almost as if these people have no memory—as if they take no notes. They go back to their notes, look, and say, "Well, wait a minute, on the 28th you said that." Very, very rarely does that happen. This is a complete and abject failure of what we call our mainstream media.

#Nima

Colonel, when we look at the destruction happening in Iran and in Israel, it's somewhat comparable. But when it comes to Iran, we see the strategy is different. They didn't attack the oil facilities before Israel attacked them. How do you see the escalation? Because if Donald Trump comes out and says you can't attack the oil facilities, then what's next? What would be the next target for the Israelis—other infrastructure? I don't know what they plan to attack. And what would be Iran's response? Are they going to attack desalination plants? Are they going to hit something that could cause a major problem, maybe even a catastrophe for the whole region?

#Lawrence

I think the Iranians have been very circumspect. They don't attack specific targets that might be to their disadvantage internationally, if you will, or even commit more serious actions until those targets are attacked in their own country—and that's usually Israel. Then they respond in kind. I understand they've done some significant damage to Haifa's oil facilities, for example, and that was only after Israel made the attack. I heard maybe forty hours ago or so someone from the administration, and then I read that Trump had actually said it. I didn't find it anywhere, but the point was that it wasn't known to him—that we didn't know Israel was going to attack the oil facilities, the implication being we would have said no, we would have stopped them if we'd known.

That, to me, is a contrived story too. Israel does whatever it wants, whenever it wants. But Iran has been, in my view, fairly circumspect—attacking targets that are militarily significant rather than, like Netanyahu, bombing everything in sight. And look at what he's doing in Lebanon right now. This is as unconscionable as the opening days of Gaza, when he was killing everything in sight. He's killing everything in sight in Lebanon now, including taking out whole hotel floors and killing people in the streets of Beirut. This guy's a bloodthirsty monster. And Trump's allied with him—totally, tooth and nail.

#Nima

Donald Trump, in his last post on social media, said that without the United States, NATO is a paper tiger. They didn't want to join the fight to stop a nuclear-powered Iran. Now that fight is militarily won. He's talking as if the United States won the war, and with very little danger from them. Then he goes on and on about the Strait of Hormuz, calling Europeans cowards because they're not

joining the United States, while at the same time somehow begging for their help. But after all, Larry, militarily, what do they have to bring to the table? Because Donald Trump seems to feel that if they join, that would be the end.

#Larry

Yeah. Well, apart from the fact that they have limited military capability—why do they need to bring anything to the table? It's over. He's won. I mean, again, this is the disconnect in the logic. If you've really achieved this glorious victory that you claim to have achieved, then why do you need anybody else, man? Take the victory lap yourself. So, you know, it's just one more reminder of his detachment from reality and his inability to recognize that he's saying irrational things, enabled by a group of sycophants like Stephen Miller, Scott Besant, Marco Rubio, and Pete Hegseth. God, you know, it's a recipe for disaster. I don't know if we can point to another period in history where the leader of a nation has been so detached from reality and so, I guess, you know—Adolf Hitler.

I mean, Hitler is actually the last one to be this out of touch with what was really happening on the ground—militarily—and still vocally expressing, "Oh, we're winning, we're victorious." And I don't make the Hitler comparison lightly. I mean, sometimes that's so grossly overused. But my God, you know, we're seeing right now the President of the United States making decisions based on either false information or, when the truth is out there, he just ignores it. He pretends he didn't hear it. We saw that last year when Tulsi Gabbard initially said, "No, Iran's not building a nuke." And when Trump was questioned—"Well, your director of national intelligence said they're not building a nuke"—he goes, "I don't listen to her. She doesn't know what she's talking about." Right there. There you have it.

#Lawrence

And what an embarrassment she was, especially under the excellent questioning of John Ossoff of Georgia. What an embarrassment she is. She doesn't even know the law. She doesn't even know that she's lying through her teeth—probably out of ignorance—that the president alone makes these decisions and determines what's good intelligence and bad intelligence. That's a violation of everything the 1947 National Security Act and its amendments set out, including the amendment that established the DNI. It's a violation of everything. She doesn't know her job, she doesn't know the position she's in, and she doesn't know the position Trump's in either.

And one other thing—you know, I imagine Cain has been telling some things to Hegseth, who has been maybe guardedly giving under Trump. I don't know, but it may be just coming from the Pentagon. When we did the massive reorganization after we cut the military by about 25% in 1991, '92, '93, and then a little bit afterward, we shopped out many things. We had done it beforehand to an extent, but we really shopped them out after that. And what do I mean by that? I mean that mine countermeasures—subsea, surface, and air—were shopped out to the Allies in Europe. Icebreaking was shopped out to the Allies in Europe. Every time we would do a coordinated joint

exercise—combined exercise, in this case—they would do those functions, and we would monitor those functions and say, “Yeah, that was good,” or, “No, you need to do this.”

You need to do whatever. In other words, we shared with our allies the things we didn’t want to spend much money on and didn’t particularly want to do ourselves, because they weren’t really in our area of expertise. We didn’t do them especially well, or whatever, and maybe the Norwegians did, maybe the Brits did, and so forth. I imagine there’s some of that going on right now with mine countermeasures. And that’s really what’s got the Pentagon irritated about not having the allies participate, because they do have some very sophisticated mine countermeasure capabilities. Just one case in point: we have ships—most of them, anyway—that are total wrecks in terms of what they were designed for. One of them, built by Lockheed Martin, even broke in half the minute it came off the slide and went into the water.

We had to do something with those ships. We’d spent a lot of money on them, so we took a few and turned them into minesweepers. They’re very awkward minesweepers. Some of them have, for example, metallic hulls, whereas a modern minesweeper has a laminated plastic hull—so you don’t become your own worst enemy while you’re sweeping. That might be behind some of this angst about the European allies. I don’t think it would make any difference even if they joined, because I think the Iranians have the upper hand. It’s their ocean, their sea, their coastline, and they’re quite well armed to protect it. So I think it’s a moot point, but that might be why Hegseth, at least, and Cain might be a little irritated at the odds.

#Larry

Well, let me just add, we don’t have any functioning minesweepers right now. So we’re out. The greatest military in the world is out of minesweepers.

#Lawrence

And when we did this in ‘88 and ‘89—and believe me, some of that gear is still around, like the towed rigs the helicopters pull through—we had a real problem. We almost lost two of our own mine countermeasure ships because we screwed up. So it’s not an expertise you maintain on a routine basis. You might practice it once a year, and your equipment’s kind of the same way, too. You don’t really use it that much. And when you have allies who do it in the combined exercises, you don’t have to.

#Nima

You know, since you both mentioned Tulsi Gabbard, we remember when she was chosen by the Trump administration to be part of it. Everybody was somehow happy about Tulsi Gabbard. But the transformation of Tulsi Gabbard is just amazing—being a Democrat, then a Republican, then coming, you know, to the Trump team. And right now she’s destroying every bit of credibility she had before.

And here's what—well, you know, Congressman Castro was asking her legitimate questions about the war against Iran. Here's what she said.

#Speaker 06

The death and disruption continue. The economic cost to the United States, to Israel, to the Gulf states, and to the world keeps increasing. So I want to ask you, to the best of your knowledge, do you know whether Israel supports the president's call to make a deal with Iran?

#Speaker 07

I don't know the answer to that. I don't know Israel's position on it.

#Speaker 06

And what do you think led Israel to strike Iran's energy infrastructure, even though President Trump had called to keep those facilities off-limits?

#Speaker 07

I don't have an answer for that.

#Speaker 06

So they ignored the president. Do you agree with that?

#Speaker 07

I'm not privy to any of their deliberations or what went into their calculus in launching this or other attacks. We're not involved in the operational side of it. We're continuously providing, on a daily basis, intelligence assessments of the events that are occurring.

#Speaker 06

I guess I know the FBI can't, because they're domestic—but can anyone else at the table provide any insight into that?

#Speaker 08

I guess I'm not sure what question you're asking, Congressman Castro. A couple of things—the goals the president set out are clearly defined. The DNI outlined those. What was not included is a goal of the U.S. campaign. Well, Director, let me start with this question—you asked what my question is.

#Speaker 06

Let me reclaim my time, Director. Come on. Do you know why Israel decided to strike that infrastructure, even though the president said it should be off-limits? I wouldn't speak for Israel. What do you guys know? We're at war—what do you guys know? We'll have to take that for the record.

#Lawrence

Let me just quickly say—and I don't want to go too far with this—but we knew through the NSA virtually every single conversation that was taking place during the war in Iraq. The second one—well, probably the first one too, but I wasn't that close to it in the first one. I went to the briefings in the second one. We knew what Germany was saying, what France was saying, what Israel was saying, what Saddam Hussein was saying, what Turkey was saying. Every day, we knew. Okay? So they're sitting there either unaware of the capacity and capabilities they have, or they're freaking lying. We spy on the Israelis all the time, and they on us.

#Nima

Larry, what do you make of the position Tulsi Gabbard is in right now? We have the director of counterterrorism, Joe Kent, resigning from his position because he doesn't agree with Donald Trump and the new policies toward the war in the Middle East. You see Tulsi Gabbard trying to do whatever she can to support Donald Trump, and you see Joe Kent leaving. How do you see the fracture that's happening within the administration? Do you think that's going to happen again and again, or is Joe Kent going to be the first and last one to come out of the administration?

#Larry

Well, judging by how Joe is being treated—both by the media and many of his former colleagues—there's little incentive for anyone to come forward and be essentially a whistleblower, which is what he is. What he did is so rare. Go back to the first Gulf War, the second one, the March 2003 attack on Iraq—I mean, Iraq.

#Larry

Nobody resigned. Nobody stood up and said, "No, we're attacking Iraq for no good reason."

#Lawrence

Colonel Ann Wright. Don't forget Colonel Ann Wright.

#Larry

Yeah, well, yes. Okay, yeah, you're correct. Yeah, but it's rare—very rare. And Tulsi dishonored herself. She took an oath to the Constitution, not to Donald Trump, and she's betrayed that oath. I don't know if it's for money, for attention, or just to enjoy being in a powerful position. But she sits atop as the coordinator for the entire intelligence community, producing intelligence for the president to make sure he's got the most accurate picture of what's going on. And instead of being a truth-teller, she's a political spinmeister. It's shameful.

#Lawrence

Nima, let me just make one comment. I think I disagree a little bit with what Larry just said, and let me tell you why. I think we're going to see people—I don't know that Joe Kent is a leader of this sort of thing, for example—but I think we're going to see people like Vance, maybe even Rubio, and certainly a layer of people underneath them who are going to start abandoning ship because they know if they stay, they have no future whatsoever. I'd put Vance at the top of that list, and I'd go back to Pence and say, regardless of what you think of Mike Pence, he at least had a viable political career and still had a career to go. It killed that—being Trump's vice president in the first term.

So I think some people—I don't know what Vance is going to do, because he's trapped. In many ways, he's trapped. He's probably thinking right now, "God, why did I accept this position?" Probably sending notes to Peter Thiel saying, "Why did you mislead me?" But there are going to be some people who try to salvage their future prospects. It'll be mostly young people, maybe in the second and third layers. But I think they're going to start leaving.

#Larry

Yeah, let me just—so, I know there was a meeting Monday night with Tulsi, Joe Kent, and J.D. Vance. What I was told is that they were using Kent as a way to try to wake Trump up. Now, if you noticed in Kent's conversation with Tucker Carlson, he was very careful not to attack Trump—in fact, he spoke very complimentarily of him. Anybody who's read Schopenhauer knows that's the technique you use when dealing with a corrupt narcissist: you flatter them and make them think it's their idea. But even so, what was fascinating about that conversation was that before Kent left, he had a one-on-one with Trump—he actually sat down and talked with him.

And no matter what, in that setting, Trump's very solicitous and kind. But when Kent's not sitting there, Trump is just brutal and insulting. So I'm hoping Col. Wilkerson's correct that there will be others who follow. But as we've seen—here's Joe Kent, and they're talking about the FBI investigating him for leaks—everybody's got to sit down and weigh the cost. If I do this, it's sort of like Edward Norton: I've got to get the hell out of the country. And not many are willing to make that sacrifice.

#Lawrence

That was done to put the fear of God in future ones, that's for sure. Yep, yep.

#Nima

Carl, we know that before the war, the Trump administration increased the defense budget by about \$600 billion. And then, after roughly three weeks of this war with Iran, they came out with a new budget, talking about another \$200 billion more. That's going to basically double the budget they had before—it was \$900 plus \$900. And here's what Pete Hegseth said about that.

#Speaker 09

I think that number could move, obviously. It takes money to kill bad guys. So we're going back to Congress and our folks there to make sure we're properly funded—for what's been done and for what we may have to do in the future. We need to make sure our ammunition is refilled, and not just refilled, but stocked above and beyond. I mean, President Trump, as he said, rebuilt the military in his first term. Didn't think he'd use it as dynamically in his second, but he did. So thank goodness he did that. An investment like this is meant to say, hey, we'll replace anything that was spent.

And now that we're reviving our defense industrial base, rebuilding the arsenal of freedom, and cutting deals like our great deputy secretary here is doing—long lead times on exquisite munitions—we're going to be refilled faster than anyone imagined. And I think, you know, we're also still dealing with the environment that Joe Biden created, which was depleting those stockpiles and not sending them to our own military, but to Ukraine. Every time we reach back and look at any sort of challenge we have, it goes back to, "Well, send it to Ukraine." Ultimately, we think these munitions are better spent in our own interests at this point. And this kind of funding bill is going to ensure that we're properly funded going forward.

#Nima

There are reports that the United States is burning through cruise missiles. Carl, what's your understanding?

#Lawrence

There were so many lies in that, I don't even know where to start. The last one, of course, about Biden—Biden actually did something to plus up some of the more critical categories of munitions that we hadn't been watching very closely. And it didn't all go to Ukraine; we wouldn't have anything right now if it had. What Pete Hegseth has done in, what, 14 or 15 months, is probably infinitesimal compared to the long lead time you need to do these things. So it's just full of lies. A \$200 billion supplemental only makes sense because I know what we do in the Pentagon when we start any kind of kinetic activity.

The first thing you do is put that supplemental over there, even if you don't need it. And I'll tell you right now, they cannot spend the money they've got fruitfully. It's so bad that much of it is being lost to what I'll call the poisonous ways they have to distribute it, and the speed at which they have to do it to make sure it doesn't go away. It's kind of like running out at the end, you know, and just throwing everything in. They're spending money on things right now that aren't going to prove very effective and are probably just full of graft and stealing because they're moving so fast.

And they—not Biden—they've disassembled all the checks and balances in the Pentagon, ostensibly and allegedly because he wants things to move fast. He wants, as he puts it, the technology to get into the field before it's obsolete. Well, that's a nice thing to say, but when you eliminate testing, evaluation, analysis, oversight, and everything else, guess what the contractor's going to do to you—what they've done since time immemorial? Rip your ass off. Yeah. So he's just lying. He's lying through his teeth.

#Larry

Well, you know, the other thing he's ignoring is that, because of Trump's so-called brilliant trade strategy, the Chinese have cut off the supply of rare earth minerals and gallium, which are critical components in many of the weapons systems and supporting systems like radars. Notice they still haven't been able to build and install the radars in the nose cone of the F-35s because of the lack of those materials from China. And those aren't going to show up anytime soon. So no matter—let's just assume you could actually build a factory that was automated to produce, say, PAC-3 missiles, turning them out a hundred a day instead of a hundred every two months—they still wouldn't be able to do it, because they don't have some of the critical raw materials China's holding back.

#Lawrence

And if you know anything about defense production in wartime, Nima, you know that you've got to go to at least two shifts—and if you're really going balls to the wall, you've got three shifts, eight hours each, twenty-four hours a day. Where are you going to get the workforce? Where are you going to get the skilled workforce? Because more and more, these weapons require skilled workers, even if it's mostly automated. Take the Tomahawk production line, for example. One of the reasons they couldn't increase Tomahawk production for the Navy was because they didn't have the skilled workers to do it. And look at our submarine fleet.

Our submarine fleet is now so far behind on both classes—ballistic missile and attack—that, by law, the program should be canceled. Congress says if this happens, cancel the program. Well, it's happened in both the Columbia and—I forget the class for the attack—Virginia class or something like that. But in both of those classes, they both should be canceled. The only reason they're not is because they're utterly essential to our defense and our security. And they know that in the contracting business. But one of the reasons is we don't have a workforce. We couldn't go to three shifts. We couldn't go to two shifts. We just don't have the workforce.

#Nima

Larry, does that mean the United States has to produce everything—for itself and for Israel? And what do we actually know about Israel's capabilities in providing, I don't know, cruise missiles or whatever they need for their fighter jets?

#Larry

Well, Israel has its own production facilities for, I think, the missiles used in David's Sling and in their Iron Dome. But those—particularly those air defense systems—aren't designed to take out the ballistic missiles that Iran is using. And similarly, they're not industrially equipped to produce on the scale that, say, China does. So I would argue that much of the military-industrial infrastructure in both the United States and Israel is really designed for 20th-century warfare, not for 21st-century warfare.

And what I mean by that is, in a way, it's like "back to the future." In 1941–42, when U.S. industrial plants started pushing out massive quantities of planes, Jeeps, and tanks, and rapidly building ships, they at least had the infrastructure and materials needed to produce those items. We're still sort of geared to that model, except we don't have the supply chains, we don't have the workforce, and we also don't have the right incentives built into some of these contracts. Lockheed Martin found they could make more money by having PAC-3 missiles built by hand rather than by robot.

So when you look at the defense industry, this is what really separates the Russian and Chinese defense industries from that of the West. The Chinese and Russian systems are not profit-driven; they're not subject to shareholders who want to make more money. They're accountable to their governments to meet what the government says are the requirements—what they need to fight on the battlefield. And this is why the U.S. defense budget is at least twice the size of the combined defense budgets of Russia and China. I mean, just think about that—it's ridiculous. The for-profit system actually ends up undermining our ability to defend ourselves.

#Lawrence

And the grifters in the system. I read an analysis recently that I think is fairly accurate—China gets about two and a half times the bang for its buck as we do. And I don't know the answer to this, Larry. Maybe you do. Are Israel's production facilities underground? No, no.

#Larry

I think they're mostly above ground.

#Lawrence

So they might be taking a pounding too.

#Larry

Yeah, well, no, they've been hit. And again, it goes back to the arrogance, because they assumed that their Iron Dome and their David's Sling would be so effective that Iran couldn't touch them. And then they discovered last June that they could be touched—and you can't move everything underground in that short period of time.

#Speaker 07

Yeah.

#Nima

Colonel, here's what the NATO Secretary General said about helping the United States in the war. Ruta, ruta, ruta.

#Speaker 11

Contacts with allies all over NATO territory—what I'm sensing and hearing is that we all agree, as we always have, that it's crucial for Iran not to get its hands on a nuclear capability or a ballistic missile capability. What the U.S. is doing right now is degrading that capability, and I think that's very important. This matters for European security, for the Middle East, and it's vital for Israel itself. When it comes to the Strait of Hormuz, everybody agrees that trade there cannot stay closed—it has to open up again as soon as possible. This is crucial for the world economy. From my perspective, what allies are seeing is that they're intensely discussing, among themselves and with the United States, the best way forward to tackle this huge security issue. And let me add that I'm confident allies, as always, will do everything in support of our shared interests.

#Lawrence

I'm not confident. I'm not the Lee Smith confident. I don't think he speaks for Macron, Starmer, Merz, and a host of other leaders. I just don't think he does. That has always been—well, I don't know that he realizes he's demonstrating it—but that has always been our principal objection to NATO. They talk. Whether you go back to Serbia or some of the other little conflicts we've had since World War II, it's always talk, talk, talk, but very seldom action. So generally what you get is us peeling off a country here, a country there, and making a—what did Donald Rumsfeld call them?—a Coalition of the Willing. Because you can't ever get the alliance; it's not threatened sufficiently to wake up to a real threat. And Iran's not a real threat. Why should they wake up to it? I mean, maybe the Strait of Hormuz being closed is a significant threat—but who did that? Right.

#Nima

Larry, Iran is defining a new sort of mechanism for the Strait of Hormuz, and that's going to last for years to come—it's not just temporary. How do you see this? They're saying the strait is closed—it's not closed. The strait is open, but they're choosing who can use it, who can pass through. You have Chinese, Indian, Iraqi, even Malaysian tankers passing through, but none from Europe, the United States, or other countries. How do you see the Strait of Hormuz becoming one of the main reasons for all these countries in the Middle East to come together and define a new security architecture for the region without the United States?

#Larry

Well, you know, let's go back to what Joe Kent said in his interview with Tucker, because I was struck by it. He suggested that one of the conditions Iran would have to agree to, if this war ended in a negotiated settlement, is that all future oil purchases would be in U.S. dollars—the petrodollar. So Kent understood that part of what's driving this war, part of what's driving the U.S. to attack Iran, is an attempt to destroy BRICS and disrupt the economic restructuring taking place in the world right now.

So what is Iran doing? They're in business now with China. You know, I feel like we should play that background music—you know, the song "Takin' Care of Business." Because the Iranians are saying, "Hey, Pakistan, you want that oil to come out? Sure. Pay for it in yuan. You give us our 10%, and you're free to go." Same for India. Everybody's got to pay in yuan. And apparently, Xi Jinping just announced within the last day or two that he'd actually like to see the yuan become an international reserve currency.

#Lawrence

Yes. Boy wrote it in a manifesto.

#Larry

Yeah. So now we know what this is—the Battle of the Titans: the City of London and the United States trying to preserve the primacy of the dollar, and the Russians, the Chinese, and now the Iranians doing everything they can to destroy it.

#Lawrence

Which brings me to a comment I made yesterday, and I'll keep making it. I think the powers behind the throne are really focused on that objective when it comes to this war. They want to stop China.

#Nima

Colonel, here's what Scott Besson said about the situation in the Strait of Hormuz and its consequences.

#Speaker 05

They broke the glass plan across the administration and at Treasury. We unsanctioned Russian oil. We knew there were about 130 million barrels on the water, and we created supply beyond the Strait of Hormuz. So we anticipated this. We knew there could be a temporary—and I want to emphasize temporary—choke point there. And there were 130 million barrels of floating storage. In the coming days, we may unsanction the Iranian oil that's on the water—about 140 million barrels. So depending on how you count it, that's 10 days to two weeks of supply the Iranians had been pushing out. That would have all gone to China. In essence, we'll be using the Iranian barrels against the Iranians to keep the price down for the next 10 or 14 days as we continue this campaign.

#Lawrence

Let's see you do that, Scott. That'd be my first comment. My second comment would be, okay, Putin's up to 150 million a day in windfall profits now—probably 200 million before the month is out. And you're doing all this on the high seas. You want a global war? You want to start a world war? Keep on. I understand that we now finally have the Russians' gruesome cojones. We finally have a tanker headed for Havana—at least that's where the people I talk to about this think it's headed. And it's got enough to relieve some of the real problems in Cuba right now. It's going to be really interesting to see what Donald Trump does when he finds out—if he hasn't already—that this is the case, if it is. We could stumble into a global conflict very easily here.

#Nima

I don't know how prepared they are. It seems they weren't ready for the war with Iran to keep dragging on.

#Lawrence

You remember that video from two or three days ago of Scott Besson being interrupted and having to go offstage? Then he came back after being contacted by the president offstage. I don't know if the president was in the wings or if he just called him or whatever, but it was unprecedented. He had to get up in the middle of his talk and leave the stage, and when he came back, he was visibly shaken. I think that's because the president told him he'd just gotten off the phone with Putin and lifted some of the sanctions—because that was Scott Besson's pet project, the sanctions on Russia.

So this is changing everything they were doing, and they're playing a pickup game—a pickup game with the world at stake—in order to deal with it. And, oh, by the way, why was our Strategic Petroleum Reserve allowed to drop below 500 million barrels, down to 415 million, on Trump's

watch, when Trump had said during the campaign that he'd make sure it was topped off and then some? And he's tapped it again. So we're creating some problems—big problems—for the world and for ourselves. And we're courting not just the renminbi taking over the dollar's role in the global economy; we're courting a war with China—not over Taiwan, not in the South China Sea.

We're courting a war that would probably start with submarines all around the world. And by the way, China and Russia together match or even overmatch us in terms of nuclear submarines, effective torpedoes, and quiet, silent diesel submarines. Someone said to me the other day, "How could they send a diesel submarine?" I said, "Dude, have you ever looked at our campaigns in the Pacific, where we left Pearl, went to the Straits of Formosa—now the Taiwan Strait—sank Japanese shipping, and came back? Those were diesel-electric, dude. They have long legs. By the way, we don't have any of those—not a single one."

#Nima

Larry, is Donald Trump empowering BRICS from within?

#Larry

To an extent, but they've also had some success in trying to weaken BRICS—or at least they had some success early on. I think that's reversing. I know our good friend Pepe Escobar has been somewhat in despair over India's behavior, but India really painted itself into a corner. Modi's effort to side with the Israelis—and really, a lot of what's driving Modi is just anti-Muslim prejudice—means he caters to the Hindu view and hates the Muslims. But now it's coming at a huge cost, not just politically but economically. The oil India was buying from Russia at \$55 a barrel is gone; it's now paying at least \$90 a barrel.

So its energy costs have doubled, which means the inflation rate in India is going to go through the roof. I mean, global inflation is going to be a reality for everybody—with the exception, well, even in Russia. But it's not going to hurt Russia because, as Col. Wilkerson said, they're rolling in dough. You know, Putin is the big, big winner out of this whole misadventure by the West, because they control oil, they control liquefied natural gas, they control major quantities of it, as well as fertilizer. They are the largest producer of fertilizer. Now, you know, they're the only girl at the Sadie Hawkins dance—they get to choose who they want to dance with and who they don't.

And the rest of the world is lined up like, "Oh, please, please, let me be your partner"—except Europe so far. But the time's coming when Europe's going to have to cave on that. You saw how quickly Trump and company caved on this notion of "We're going to use sanctions." You know, "We're sanctioning Russia, we're sanctioning Iran." And then they even said, "Yeah, we're going to lift the sanctions on Iran so they can sell oil." So this isn't about some deep-seated idea of "We've got

to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon” or “We’ve got to stop Iran from killing its protesters.” Bullshit. This is about money. And the U.S. wants to control it—and it’s losing control of it. That’s what this whole thing is ultimately about.

#Lawrence

Bingo. And Europe just bought the entire complement of Russian Arctic LNG—the entire complement. They passed a law in 2022, but it wouldn’t go into effect for five years. January 27 is when it goes into effect. And they just violated the spirit of that law anyway. And she said—what’s her name?—she said, “Well, in January we’ll stop buying it.” Right.

#Larry

In a pig’s ass, you will. Well, I wonder if Russia’s going to declare force majeure and say, “We’re not going to sell to you. We’ve got these other people we need to service.” Because they just— you know, the frigging Europeans just seized another Russian tanker in the Mediterranean. And I don’t see the Russians sitting back and saying, “Oh, well, no big deal.” I think they’re going to make a big deal out of it.

#Lawrence

Yeah, so do I. I think we have a prospect, on the high seas at least, of this war widening seriously.

#Nima

Larry, you—Colonel and I were talking about the case of Charlie Kirk, the various sessions we’ve had discussing what’s happened. Finally, we have someone who actually has some information, who knows better—Joe Kent. He had an interview with Tucker Carlson, and he addressed what’s happened with the case of Charlie Kirk. Here’s what he said.

#Speaker 12

Charlie Kirk was killed publicly in a very horrific way, and we’re not even allowed to look into it at all. He was one of President Trump’s closest advisors, and he also spoke out strongly against a war with Iran. He was in the Oval Office in the lead-up to the 12-day war. I wasn’t particularly close with Charlie—he was very gracious to me when I was running for Congress, very, very supportive. So we knew each other.

The last time I saw Charlie Kirk on this earth was in June, in the West Wing, in the stairway. I said hi to him, and he looked me in the eye and said, very loudly—and it’s a small space, you’ve been in the West Wing, it’s tight—he said, “Joe, stop us from getting into a war with Iran.” Very loud. He was single-minded, and he walked off and went, I believe, into the Oval. So when one of President Trump’s

s closest advisers, who was vocally advocating for us not to go to war with Iran and to at least rethink our relationship with the Israelis, is suddenly publicly assassinated and we're not allowed to ask any questions about it—that's a data point. It's a data point we need to look into.

#Speaker 08

What do you mean when you say we're not allowed to ask any questions about that?

#Speaker 12

We've been told that this individual, Robinson, is a lone gunman—and maybe he is. But the investigation I was part of, and that the National Counterterrorism Center was part of, was stopped before we could continue. The FBI said they halted it because they wanted to turn everything over to the Utah state authorities. Everything's going to trial, it's very, very sensitive. But there was still a lot for us to look into that I can't really get into. There were still links we needed to run down. I'm not making any conclusions. I'm not saying, "Because of this, that happened." I'm not saying that at all. I'm just saying there are unanswered questions. We know from the text messages that have been made public that Charlie was under a lot of pressure from pro-Israel donors. And again, we know Charlie was advocating to President Trump against this war with Iran. Yeah. Yeah.

#Larry

Hey, look, the first American politician that Israel participated in the assassination of was John F. Kennedy. Israel attacked the USS Liberty. And there is compelling circumstantial evidence that people connected with Israel, and working with others—perhaps the French as well—killed Charlie Kirk. So this is, you know—and the notion that this Tyler Robinson was, quote, "the lone gunman," please. The rifle he was alleged to have used would have torn Charlie's head off. If that round had been fired from that rifle, the neck would have completely exploded—the head would have been separated from the body. So this was an unusual round that was shot, which suggests something very, you know, a sophisticated assassination attempt. And I mean, just one other point that, again, people don't think through operationally.

How do you do something like that? If you're going to take a shot at 140 yards, you've got to make sure your rifle is zeroed—number one. Number two, how do you know where to take the shot from? Because this kid, Tyler Robinson, supposedly had never been to that campus before. So we're supposed to believe he just walked around and said, "Oh, that spot looks good," then climbed up there and decided his best way to escape was to run and jump off the roof? No, no, no. Look, with these things, you do surveillance beforehand, you do reconnaissance beforehand, and you put a plan together. How do you get in there? What do you need to do to make sure you can get a weapon into a particular position? How do you get away? What's the escape plan? Robinson had none of those planning capabilities. This was a sophisticated operation—one that Israel is quite capable of.

#Lawrence

And I'd say the only thing they haven't done, similar to the JFK assassination, is they haven't had a Jack Ruby walk into the jail cell and kill Robinson.

#Larry

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

#Nima

Just to wrap up this session—yesterday, Netanyahu said something about Jesus, comparing him to Genghis Khan. And it's really caused a stir; the repercussions are just exploding out there. But here's what he said, and many people are criticizing Netanyahu because these kinds of comments are not, you know, good at all. Still, he's making them. Let's look at what he said.

#Speaker 13

Unfortunately, and unhappily, Jesus Christ has no advantage over Genghis Khan. Because if you are strong enough, ruthless enough, powerful enough, evil will overcome good. Aggression will overcome moderation.

#Lawrence

Oh, he's living testimony to the truth of that.

#Larry

Maybe he is. Yeah. You know, just when you think the guy's smart, he says something that abjectly stupid and offensive to Christians. But, you know, we know that these Jews in Israel—the Zionists—they hate Christians. And, you know, any Jew, because Jesus was a Jew, any Jew who converts to Christianity and tries to return to Israel under the so-called right of return for Jews, they're not allowed. They're prohibited because they're no longer considered Jewish—they're Christian.

So this animosity toward Christians—and then you get these idiots within the Christian community who claim to be Christians, but they're Christian Zionists. Jesus' message was quite simple on several fronts: he overcame evil with good, he rose from the dead. All the evil that was done to him to try to destroy him couldn't. You know, they say, "You can't keep a good man down." They couldn't keep a good man in the tomb. And the resurrection of Jesus showed that salvation was no longer only for one special group of people who claimed, "We're the chosen ones of God." No—Jesus came out and said, "You know what? Salvation is for everyone."

#Lawrence

And Bibi Netanyahu has no idea what Genghis Khan would have done or said if he had met Jesus Christ. After all, Constantine let him take over his empire.

#Nima

Thank you so much, Carl and Larry, for being with us today. It's a great pleasure, as always.

#Larry

Let's hope we have a peaceful weekend, at least of sorts, but I'm afraid this thing is going to keep escalating out of control.

#Lawrence

Yeah, exactly. Ditto.

#Larry

See you soon. Thank you. All right, my friend.

#Lawrence

Take care. Behave yourself.

#Nima

Take care.

#Lawrence

Yeah. Keep Brazil safe. Yeah. Bye-bye. Bye.