

Larry Johnson & Col. Wilkerson: Iran's Strategy to Defeat U.S. Dominance

Analysis of escalating Iran conflict challenges official narratives on military dominance. Discussion covers contradictory claims about Iranian defenses, Kharg Island risks, oil market impacts & rising gas prices. Guests examine media accountability failures, military logistics challenges, & administration fractures. Broader themes: BRICS vs petrodollar economic warfare, NATO hesitation, Strait of Hormuz security. Warnings issued on global escalation risks & inflammatory rhetoric affecting interfaith relations. Critical examination of decision-making detached from operational realities & supply chain constraints undermining defense production.

#Nima

Yesterday, we had Donald Trump talking about the current situation with the war against Iran. He said he was describing the situation of the American army against Iran. Here's what he said — it was yesterday at 12 p.m.

#Guest

Just about everything there is obliterated, including the leadership. The 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. They released footage of it, which was then reported by CNN. Do you believe, Larry, that Donald Trump is receiving false information? Because somehow it's so delusional, the way he's talking about the battle. It sounds 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 to get my way through high school, so I have some familiarity with medicine. Donald Trump is crazy—I mean, he's demented. And 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 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 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, a man who's had the White House beat several times, each for about a 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, and sits 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 collapsing, and 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. We're starting to see defections throughout the regime, and that's how this ends. So 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. So all the oil workers are being coerced to stay, and 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 re-flag 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—then 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 go 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 in terms of the depth of the water and everything—unlike any other place in the Gulf. It can refuel or fuel ten supertankers at the same time, so it's absolutely essential. You take that full 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? Because 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. Look, if we've got ten Ospreys, that's 240 Marines—that's basically only 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.

So 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 that's right there on the Gulf? 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 or artillery pieces capable of firing into the Gulf—not to mention missiles, 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 in order 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 insinuating. 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 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

received so much fire from Iran that they've had to withdraw to a more secure location, perhaps Incirlik. But that CAOC monitors every single aircraft—or 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. Iran made it very clear: if you hit us here, we're going to hit you there. It was tit for tat, exactly what happened. And by blowing these up, they're extending the time that the world oil, LNG, and fertilizer shortages will last. There's no quick solution on the horizon.

And, you know, I want to remind people of the bragging that Donald Trump did during the State of the Union address on the 24th of February. 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 my predecessor—it was, quite honestly, a disaster—is now below \$2.30 a gallon in most states, and in some places \$1.99 a gallon. And when I visited the great state of Iowa just a few weeks ago, I 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, at the start, February 28th, the gas price was \$2.54. It's now up a full dollar, \$3.54, and it's going to continue to rise.

#Larry

And Trump can't go back and pretend he had nothing to do with this. This is all the result of his actions. And yet, once again, you don't see anybody in the press calling him out, holding him accountable, asking him, "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 don't go back to their notes and say, "Wait a minute, on the 28th you said this." 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, somehow they seem 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 might want to attack. And what would be Iran's response? Are they going to attack desalination plants or 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 war crimes, 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 claim was that he didn't know. We didn't know Israel was going to attack the oil facilities, the implication being that 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 in 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 Truth Social, 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 saying the United States won the war 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? 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—well, 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—explaining it and vocally insisting, "Oh, we're winning, we're victorious." And I don't

t make the Hitler comparison lightly. I mean, sometimes that's so grossly overused. But my God, we're seeing right now the president of the United States making decisions based on either false information or on the truth that's out there—he just ignores it and 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. The president doesn't just make these decisions and determine what's good intelligence and what's 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's maybe been guardedly passing them along to Trump.

I don't know, but it may be coming from the Pentagon. When we did the massive reorganization after we cut the military by about 25% in 1991, 1992, 1993, 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, you know, yeah, that was good. Oh no, you need to do this, you need whatever.

In other words, we did share with our allies things we didn't want to spend much money on and didn't particularly want to do ourselves, because they weren't in our, shall we say, 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 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 even came off the ways, built by Lockheed Martin, and broke in half the minute it slid 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. 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 Kane might be a little irritated with the allies.

#Larry

Well, let me just add, we don't have any functioning minesweepers right now. Yeah, 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 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.