

# Lt Col. Daniel Davis: Iran's Trap Is Already Set... And the U.S. Is Moving In

## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Wednesday, March 25th, 2026, and our dear friend, Lt Col. Daniel Davis, is here with us. Welcome back, Colonel.

## #Daniel

Always a delight to be here, Nima. Thanks for having me.

## #Nima

Colonel, let me start with the current situation and the escalation in the Middle East. Before we get there, we had Donald Trump yesterday together with Pete Hegseth, and Pete Hegseth came up to the podium. He said something really interesting to a lot of people—they want to know what's happening. And here's what Pete Hegseth said.

## #Speaker 03

Mr. President, you're spot on. Never in history has a modern military—Iran had a modern military, a modern navy, a modern air force, modern air defenses, leadership, massive bunkers—never has a modern military been so rapidly and historically obliterated, defeated from day one with overwhelming firepower. The air campaign that we've conducted, that Israel's conducted alongside us, was one for the history books, truly. And it's because we have a President of the United States who, when he sends his warfighters out to fight, unties their hands to actually go out and close with and destroy the enemy as viciously as possible from moment one. And that's why we see ourselves as part of this negotiation as well.

We negotiate with bombs. You have a choice, as we loiter over the top of Tehran, as the President talked about—about your future. The President has made it clear that you will not have a nuclear weapon. The War Department agrees. Our job is to ensure that. So we're keeping our hand on that throttle as long and as hard as necessary to ensure the interests of the United States of America are achieved on that battlefield. This is not Iraq or Afghanistan. This is not a president who's interested in vague end states. He's been very clear with us about what we need to accomplish—creating the conditions for them never to have a nuclear capability—and that's exactly what we're doing, in historic fashion. Thank you, Mr. President.

## **#Nima**

Carl, who is he trying to convince, and what's the reality of what's happening right now?

## **#Daniel**

Nima, that is really hard to watch, man—especially for somebody who served a career in the U.S. military, with four combat deployments of my own. I'm just like, what is he talking about? I mean, let's just start with the first part there—that we have historically defeated a modern state. I mean, we talked about it: the Iranian side has F-4 fighters from the 1960s. So, not quite like a fifth-gen fighter that you defeated. First of all, he's trying to make it sound like we have this massive capability, like we defeated the Russians or the Chinese, or this really powerful modern force—which is nonsense. Of course, just at face value, that's nonsense.

But then, okay, if you've defeated them in historic fashion, then I guess the war is over, right? I mean, let's start popping the champagne corks, man, because it's time to schedule the parade. Here we go. Oh, hang on—the Strait of Hormuz is still closed, and we've killed a lot of people in Iran, but they still have a navy. They still have a rocket force, a ballistic missile force, and a drone force. We haven't done anything to knock those things out. Maybe we've diminished some, but we certainly haven't knocked them out—as Israel is testament to on a daily basis, with some pretty big targets here. So, you know, what the hell are you even talking about, that we have, past tense, defeated this other force?

Because all that does, in my view, is bring even more shame onto the administration—onto Secretary Haqqeth personally—because everybody in the world who has two eyes and one brain can see that you've dropped a lot of bombs, hit about 15,000 different targets by the last estimate I saw. It was listed yesterday by CENTCOM. And yet all those strikes have not brought the country to heel. They haven't resulted in regime change, despite the strange things President Trump said about that. They haven't taken away their missile force, their navy, or their support for regional allies. And the Strait of Hormuz remains closed. Ergo, you have resolutely failed in every single category you set out to achieve at the beginning. Why, then, do you want to talk like you're bragging about some victory?

Only people on some of the conservative media who keep repeating this stuff seem to be the only ones buying it. And I don't know how much they're really buying it, as opposed to just repeating the story. I guess they just want to tell their followers and supporters, "Don't believe what you see. Don't believe what you're hearing. Fake media, liberal media—they're lying to you. We've already won. It's just about cleaning up the battlefield. Don't worry, we've won." I guess that's their idea. But I mean, when you're cheering while watching that TV show and then you go to the gas station to fill up your tank, you're going to go, "Hang on, that's a lot more than it was just a week ago." You can't spin that part. So I don't know what the objective is here. It's weird.

## **#Nima**

You mentioned the objective—it seems that when they were talking about it, it was regime change. But somehow that's changed over the last 26 days, and now they're talking about opening up the Strait of Hormuz. So what is the objective? Is it opening up the Strait of Hormuz? And what are the administration's strategies to achieve that? And we know that—go ahead.

## **#Daniel**

Sure. I mean, at least what they're saying is, "Hey, how about a negotiated settlement? That would be great." Oh, wait a minute—we were already negotiating twice, and then we went to war and basically used that as military cover to start conflicts. So, I mean, the Iranian side would be the biggest fools on the planet if they believed anything we said at this point. And right now we desperately need them to believe and to trust us that whatever negotiation would be offered, we'd actually follow through on it. And, of course, you can even go back further than that to the 2018 withdrawal from the JCPOA by this administration. So they've literally shredded any pretense of credibility in anything they say.

Why would anyone listen to that? And yet, that's what we're doing here. On the one hand, we're talking about this 15-point plan that was apparently put forward by the administration—which, you know better than I do—is not exactly being received with enthusiasm on the Iranian side. But at the same time, we're also seeing the deployment of a lot of ground combat power: the 82nd Airborne Division, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, A-10 Warthog close air support aircraft, Apache helicopters—which are also ground support aircraft—the V-22 Ospreys, Chinook helicopters, everything you'd need for a ground operation. Everything about this says we're preparing for one.

While we're talking—which, of course, only the greatest fool in the world would ever pay any attention to—and they're not. So no one's paying attention to the diplomatic side. Everybody, certainly on the Iranian side, I would imagine, is getting ready for a ground operation somewhere—whether it's Qeshm Island, in the horseshoe of the strait, or maybe somewhere else. Maybe somebody has this harebrained idea that we're going to go and steal away this reprocessed material, if we even know where it is. If it's even in one spot, that would be suicidal for us to even attempt. But that seems to be where we're headed now. So you asked what the objective is—they don't know. They don't know what it's going to be now.

We went in hoping that, you know, a shock-and-awe kind of thing—and a decapitation by assassinating the Supreme Leader—would result in a collapse of the government. That didn't happen. And now we're in, and they're going, "Oh, snap." Somehow we didn't think they would actually do what they said, which was to attack our assets in the region, to attack Israel, to attack the Gulf GCC countries. They said all this ahead of time, and we didn't think they would do it. Trump said so out loud. He was asked about two weeks before this happened—"Iran is saying they're going to do this"—and he said, "Well, they said that last time, they didn't do it. They wouldn't risk that."

And then, you know, I think Iran also indicated that they would close down the Strait of Hormuz. Many commentators said that was likely.

Apparently, we didn't think that would happen either. But then, when all those things did happen, now the president and the Pentagon are going, "Oh, crap, what do we do now?" We've got to try to find a way out of this, and there are no easy options. This isn't like the situation with the Red Sea in 2025, where you could say, "All right, well, this really isn't working. It's really expensive, and we can't bomb them into submission. We'll just say they begged us to quit and walk away—no problem." There was no issue with the Strait of Hormuz then, and the oil wasn't being held ransom, if you want to use that term. That is the case now, because we've handed all this leverage into the hands of Tehran—leverage that never existed before and wouldn't have existed had we not gone into this war.

And now there are no obvious exit ramps, because as long as the Iranian side stays stalwart and long-suffering, and understands that—yes, we do have a lot more bombs to drop, and there are still going to be a lot more people killed, a lot more things blown up, and more harm done to the economy—if they can remain steadfast, retain political viability, and keep control over that strait, then there's no off-ramp we can take. Because the longer this goes—and you tell me if you think the Iranian side can actually sustain that kind of harm for an extended period, like 12, 18, 24 months—because we can't. We'll be lucky if we can make it another two or three months.

Some economists I saw this morning said that within two or three weeks, the price of oil—right now being artificially constrained by statements Trump has made over the last four or five days—is going to spike, because there won't be enough physical petroleum production to actually meet demand. Then you've got the issue with urea and all kinds of other things on top of that. You can't spin those for much longer, and at some point market principles will assert themselves, the price will go up, and there's no off-ramp for President Trump. So now that's going to start causing political problems, then economic problems across the board, and pressure from countries all over the world to bring this to an end. They're going to be pressuring President Trump to get off board. So the bottom line is, Nima, there is no strategy. There is panic in the White House.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, I believe that from what I've heard and seen so far, Iran is prepared for a long war—a marathon. I think it's the same strategy we've seen with the Russian army so far. They're not in a rush, but they're prepared to defend themselves. That's why you see a certain calmness. Today, everything looked normal in Iran. On the other hand, you had the Israeli mayor coming on live TV and breaking down, crying, "What is happening here?" But you don't see that kind of panic in Iran. Honestly, you just don't see it.

You follow the Iranian media, the Persian media—you don't see any sort of panic. You see the destruction, you see the death, but you don't see the panic. This is the problem the Trump

administration doesn't understand, in my opinion. And the other thing is, when it comes to the numbers, it matters when you go underground. It doesn't mean air power isn't important, but what you have underground is much more important for capturing and holding territory, to sustain that kind of operation. What's your understanding of the numbers they're providing to the region? Because, after all, that's a huge factor in the calculation.

## **#Daniel**

Well, at least publicly, what's known is that in terms of ground forces, there are around 3,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Ready Brigade, about 7,000 combat Marines from two Marine Expeditionary Units, and then some unknown number of special forces, like Army Rangers. So maybe around 11,000 total personnel involved in this. And that's not necessarily trigger-pullers—people who actually fight—but that's the total force number, because a lot of that is command and control, headquarters, supply, logistics, and that kind of thing.

So it's a lot less than actual ground troops who'd be carrying rifles or whatever. But these are all light—every one of them. So that's something you can use to, I mean, these guys are designed, really, every one of these units, to go in and seize operations or seize pieces of terrain, like an airfield, for example, only as part of a larger force so that heavier forces can come in and sustain it. These forces aren't designed to seize something and stay there for an extended period of time, or to create a bridgehead and then launch out on some sort of conquering mission beyond that to take more territory.

They only seize a bridgehead, but you have to have other forces—and that's the weird part. There aren't any other forces in the region. There's nothing else that, once you take something, could serve as exploitation forces. Where would you go? What would even be the objective? I mean, let's just say Kharg Island—that's what people are talking about the most. But okay, 90% of the oil is offloaded there for the Iranian regime, but that's not the only place they can get their oil out, number one. And number two—and I'd love to hear your thoughts on this—what would the loss of some percentage of their ability to get oil out actually mean?

I mean, with all these sanctions, it seems like they're kind of used to getting by on less. We'll see how that works out. But what would we gain by that? Is it going to put pressure on the Iranian side that isn't already there? I don't see any change in the dynamic at all. So I don't know what you'd gain even if you succeeded. I've seen statements from IRGC leaders, and some political leaders in Iran—Abbas Araghchi, actually, more than a week and a half ago—he was one of the first people I saw talking about this. And he was basically like, "Yeah, bring it on."

Are you kidding? Yes, absolutely. We wait for the Americans on the ground. You could say, on the one hand, well, that's just braggadocio—that's just putting on a brave face publicly because there's a public relations war going on, too. But if I put myself in their position, take the flags off, and just look at this from a military perspective—side A and side B—take all the hubris out of it, I'm thinking,

if I'm on the Iranian side, side B, I'm like, man, I have every advantage in the world. It's on my home turf. I've got all these huge mountain ranges that provide enormous defensive capabilities. I know the territory. I have no logistic lines to maintain—everything is right there. They're coming from thousands of miles away, and they have to keep this logistic bridge going all over the place.

Gas, fuel, ammunition—everything's got to come from a long way away. They don't know the terrain. And so you go on here, and I mean, I'm talking rocket artillery, because any of these islands are going to be in range of ground forces as well—the continental forces. So you've got long-range artillery, drones of who knows how many categories, short-range missiles, medium-range missiles, long-range missiles. It could come from anywhere in the country; all could converge wherever they decide it should be. A weapons nightmare for whatever force lands there, whether they're successful or not. And then how would you sustain it over time if you did take it? So everything, militarily, to me says this is a disaster in the making. And I don't know why we would want to choose to fight this battle.

## **#Nima**

Carl, here's what the U.S. ambassador to NATO said about pressuring NATO allies to join the fight.

## **#Speaker 04**

We've been in overdrive here diplomatically, pushing our allies—both in Brussels and across capitals in Europe and the Middle East—to convince everybody. Unfortunately, it took some effort to make them see that this is more important to them than it is to the United States. I mean, you know, we get very little, if any, oil through those straits. That's one of the great things President Trump was able to do—make America energy independent. And that independence obviously guarantees our supply. Now, you know, we have allies that are finally stepping up.

I think, you know, from the time this conflict broke out, they were pretty noncommittal about what they could bring to the fight or how they could help us. But, you know, they've done things that sometimes go unnoticed. We had several allies here in Europe and in NATO providing key and crucial basing, overflight, and access—whether it's Souda Bay, where I was in Greece on the island of Crete, or other countries, including Germany and France, that were providing access.

## **#Nima**

He's basically saying they've done everything they could, and their assessment is different from the Trump administration's. That's the difference—that's why they're not joining the fight in Australia, for the most part. What do you make of it, Carl?

## **#Daniel**

Well, I mean, I'll just tell you right off the bat, if Secretary Hegseth was an embarrassment to me on the military side, this is an embarrassment on the diplomatic side. Because he's talking about, you know, why aren't they doing stuff? And he tries to make this case—"we're protected." I mean, I don't know what their problem is, because they're the ones who get a lot of oil from the Persian Gulf. We're fine because we're energy independent. No, we're not energy independent. We import—I haven't seen the current rate, but it's somewhere between three to five million barrels per day that we import on top of what we produce, because that's the mix of different fuels. We have to have that. But secondly, if it doesn't matter, then why is the price of gasoline nearly a dollar more than it was before? Because oil is a global commodity.

So it doesn't matter where the oil comes from; it only matters what the global price is. And if the price keeps going up for the world, then it goes up for us, too. So everybody in the world—not just the West—is going to be dependent on this. But the second thing, and the more important issue, is that both diplomatically and militarily, there's a reason why no nation has stood up yet to say they're going to bring military forces of any kind—naval or air power, and definitely not ground power—to participate in this. They recognize that it's an unwinnable situation. There is no military solution that can force open the Strait of Hormuz at an acceptable cost or within an acceptable timeframe. There's a reason why our Navy—with about a third of it deployed in this mission so far, according to reports—still hasn't opened it up.

I saw General Jack Keane last week being asked that question, and he said, "Oh, well, I mean, you know what? We could, but we have global requirements. So if we did all that—sure, we could escort those vessels through there—but then we wouldn't be able to do anything else. So we need help from our allies." But see, we know that's why our ships are way, way out from the shore—because we know that the minute you bring them even heading into the Gulf of Oman, even before you get to the Strait, it's—I call it a gauntlet of death—with all that Iranian shoreline, I think about 800 miles or so, that you'd have to navigate through. And, you know, the ranges get increasingly close as you move toward the Strait and then try to get up to Karg, and so on.

You're not going to be able to drive a ship up there, even just to get to Karg Island for an offensive operation—much less for a permanent escort mission. And by all accounts, we did this in the 1980s, during that operation under Reagan, where you needed a couple of military escorts for each one of these tankers. You're talking about a hundred tankers a day just to keep the normal flow going. What navy has the assets to do something like that, even if you just sailed through the Strait, even if they weren't attacked? But everybody knows they probably would be attacked. And Iran doesn't have to sink every ship—they just have to sink a few of them as a warning. And then the next question is, which tanker is going to be the third one destroyed?

If you hit the first couple, then who's going to line up to be number three and go to the bottom of the Persian Gulf? No one's going to do that. So it's effectively closed, and it takes so little for Iran to keep it under control. They don't even have to mine the thing anymore. I think that's more of a last-ditch effort—if they got really, really desperate, they could do that to completely close it off for

everyone. But they don't need to right now. Just the threat—because there have already been a number of tankers that blew up spectacularly in the Persian Gulf, and the flames made for great video, which scared everybody. So now only those with permission can come through, and that's a limited number so far.

So why would anybody in Europe send their ships to do what our own ships won't do—what our ships can't do? Because whatever is said publicly, and whatever attempts to shame our allies like the ambassador was trying to do there, it's not going to work. At the end of the day, the same logic that's kept us from putting our ships in harm's way will keep them from putting theirs in harm's way. So they'll agree to some vague kind of support—"We're behind you," whatever. They'll help with some sort of, I think the British called it, "keep the Strait of Hormuz safe," or some amorphous thing like that. But it didn't commit to any real military power or a time frame, and I think that's what you're going to see, because nobody's going to sign up.

Nobody, diplomatically or politically, from Europe could survive if they said, "All right, I'm—I don't know, I'm just picking Greece, or the UK, or France—I'm going to send my ships there. We're with you, President Trump." And then they go to the bottom of the sea. How are they going to face their electorate when people are saying, "You just killed our sailors from our own country, when the Americans won't even send their own sailors in there. Now they're dead, our ships are at the bottom of the sea. Get out of office, we're going to fire you," or whatever. Nobody would face that, because that's what would happen if they tried to go against what the IRGC did. There are too many ways they could damage or destroy those ships.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, I think nobody can deny that the main ally of the United States in Europe is the United Kingdom. And here's the assessment of former MI6 chief Sir Alex Younger about the conflict.

## **#Speaker 03**

The upper hand right now?

## **#Speaker 05**

Iran. I regret having come to this conclusion because, like many MI6 officers of my generation, we've faced the violence and brutality of the IRGC for most of our careers.

## **#Speaker 03**

That's the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Yeah.

## **#Speaker 05**

So there's no love lost between us, and I shed no tears for Ali Khamenei, who was killed at the beginning of this war. But the reality is, the U.S. underestimated the task, and I think, as of about two weeks ago, lost the initiative to Iran. In practice, the Iranian regime has been more resilient than anyone would have expected. They actually made some good decisions as early as last June—dispersing their military capability and delegating authority for the use of those weapons—which has given them significant extra resilience against this incredibly powerful air campaign. They've embarked on what's technically called horizontal escalation, meaning firing rockets at anybody within range, which at the time, honestly, Shoshenko, I thought was nuts, but in fact has been a very effective way of putting a direct price on the U.S. It's sort of worked.

And then they've understood the significance of the energy war, held the Straits under threat, and globalized—essentially not internationalized, just globalized—the conflict in a way that gives them some leverage. So, you know, they played a weak hand there pretty well. My second point is that Donald Trump has said some things that confirmed what they already knew: that they're in a civilizational war, in their terms—a war of existence. Donald Trump made it very clear that he wanted to see them up against the wall, basically, whereas America has embarked on a war of choice. And in those terms, I think that's given them more staying power than their U.S., and certainly Western, counterparts. And they know that now.

## **#Nima**

Is there anybody in the United States listening to the people who are criticizing the attitude of the Trump administration?

## **#Daniel**

It's interesting. Of all the things you said there, I agree with that. I thought one of the more telling statements was early on, when he said he didn't think anybody really understood the staying power and stamina of the Iranian side—that they'd be able to be so resilient. And I'm thinking, what do you mean? The only way you wouldn't have known that is if you'd never paid any attention, or if you believed this caricature we have of the Iranians as religious Nazis who only want to kill everyone who's not Shia, that they're just this maniacal group whose only goal is to kill people and get nuclear weapons to kill more people. That's all they want to do, and that they're somehow a weak people.

If that's your caricature, then you don't see them as actual human beings with weaknesses and strengths, and so on. They're just evil, something that has to be oppressed. But if you'd listened to anything Iran had said in the months or even years before this, there would've been no doubt—this would have been exactly what you'd expect: that they'd be this resilient. Because they've long known the power that the West, the U.S., and Israel can bring to bear and the havoc they could wreak. That's why, for decades, they've had underground facilities—these underground cities. They've been resourced, they've been stockpiled, and they have the industrial capacity underground to keep going.

They're not foolish enough to think they're going to put things in above-ground buildings that can be easily destroyed by our capabilities. They've certainly known that, so they foresaw all of it. And then they had their military assets decentralized into, I believe, 31 different military districts spread throughout the country. They had political decentralization. They had a plan for decapitation—what would happen in the interim, what the path forward would be. I mean, they had everything mapped out. And I think, as Yus actually pointed out on our show recently, look at the eight years of the Iran-Iraq war. If you want to know how the Iranian people will react, look at what they did during that long period, when many—scores of leaders of various ranks—were assassinated or killed.

Hundreds of thousands of Iranian people sacrificed their lives. They never broke. They never gave in, even though they faced incredible economic hardships. They suffered under our sanctions, under military strikes, and so on. They never broke. Why did we think they would break this time? Why are we surprised by what we've seen here? This is what we should have expected—which, of course, is why I was so adamantly opposed to this and did everything possible, in any venue I had, to say: don't start this war of choice, because militarily we don't have the assets or the resources to win it. It was always going to be a fool's errand, and now it's being exposed as exactly that.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, since you mentioned the Iran-Iraq war, I remember asking many people what happened during those days. You know, right after the revolution, that war came up. Many of the commanders who were part of the Shah's regime were removed from power, so the war was fought by the main commanders of the IRGC and the army. Some of them were just 24 years old. You know, you can't, by killing or assassinating commanders, achieve anything, in my opinion, because they have this history. They know how to deal with these problems. They fought for eight years with a 24-year-old commander in chief. That's why I think they don't understand, and everything they consider seems to come from Mossad and the Israelis. I don't see any real assessment. I don't know how capable Tulsi Gabbard is of providing the president with sound and correct information.

## **#Daniel**

Yeah, and just to add to that—the Iran-Iraq war, on the Iranian side, they had to contend with the ground army, of course, but also air power, economic sanctions, missiles, artillery—virtually every aspect of a conflict at that time. Now there's not an army they have to contend with. It's missiles and bombs and other kinds of ordnance, but there's no ground army. And this idea that what's coming with the 82nd and the two Marine Expeditionary Units—those are dots on a map. That's not an army. At most, they can seize a location, a spot, an airfield or something—maybe Karg Island temporarily, perhaps. Maybe they can, maybe they can't. That's it, though. Even if they did everything we were asking them to do, what are they going to do then? They're not going to expand beyond that.

They're not going to start rolling through the countryside. We don't even have an army of that size, even if we wanted to try. And why would we? Look at what the Iraqi army wasn't able to do. I think the furthest penetration was about 75 miles inside Iranian territory, if I'm not mistaken—you can correct me if I'm wrong. That was in the first year, and then they were eventually pushed back. After that, it was kind of like the Korean War—it just went back and forth along a certain line for years. Even with all the support we gave the Iraqi army, they were never able to make deep penetrations into the country. So I don't know why we think we'd be able to do something they couldn't, especially when we don't even have an army that big, even if we could get them in there.

And now, according to information I saw just this morning, a lot of the PMUs—the Shia PMUs in Iraq—have been authorized to defend themselves, even against the Americans, should it come to that. So it's not like we're going to be able to use Iraq as a staging point to launch a ground invasion, if we ever got foolish enough to think that was an option. I mean, Iraq could be turning against us as well. We'll see how all that plays out. But everything suggests this is a military disaster of epic proportions for us so far. We just have to pray that President Trump somehow recognizes that and takes any kind of off-ramp he can get, because this could get a lot worse for us.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, here's what we've heard from an Iranian military source. He told Tasnim News—one of the main news agencies in Iran, which is close to the IRGC—that if the enemy carries out any ground action on Iranian islands, they will open additional fronts as a surprise response. And they're not talking about the Bab al-Mandab or the Red Sea; they're talking about something else. Do you think they mean Kuwait, Bahrain, or the UAE? Because recently, on Persian media, there's been talk about those places being invaded or captured by proxies or Iranian forces.

## **#Daniel**

Man, that would be an escalation that—if that British MI6 officer was right, that we didn't anticipate the Iranians being so resilient, and if President Trump didn't think they were going to close the Strait of Hormuz because we were caught short on that—then if they actually did something on the ground to seize something of their own, that would be mind-blowing to most Western analysts. I don't think they believe Iran even has the capacity to do that, much less the will. If they demonstrated that and actually did something like that, it would raise a whole new level of escalation.

Unfortunately, I think that would be seized upon by so many of these war hawks in the United States who are still adamant that we need to do whatever it takes to defeat the political entity of Iran. That would make them say, "Oh my God, now that we see they're much stronger than we thought, and now they've shown their true colors—I can see this coming—they're rabid, they're going to try to dominate the entire region." People have been saying this: that they want to conquer the whole region, and only our intervention so far has stopped them. But now, they've exposed their true colors—they're trying to take all these countries.

My God, we'd better mobilize right now—get a big field army if we need to. Mobilize the National Guard, bring everybody in. "Now I need all you European guys to come in and join us," etc. I think it could be used for that. And of course, then you're talking about—man, if this is a disaster so far, it's a catastrophe, because if you start something like this, it would make Vietnam look like child's play in the results. The ramifications for the global economy and for the world would be just catastrophic. In my view, if we did something like this, it would be analogous to Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, and it would be the end of the American empire. We wouldn't survive this militarily.

## **#Nima**

Karol, do you see at some point the Arab states in the Persian Gulf joining the fight on the ground? Because so far we haven't seen the Houthis and Saleh in Yemen joining the fight. Somehow, the assessment on the part of the Iranians is that we are fighting the fight. So every time you see some sort of escalation, it's on the part of the United States or the Israelis. They attack, for example, the nuclear power plant in Natanz or in Isfahan. Then Iran responds to Dimona. And the Israelis attack the South Pars gas facility, and then we get a response from the Iranians. They see themselves as somehow dominating the battlefield—they don't need to escalate. That's why they're prepared to respond to any sort of escalation.

## **#Daniel**

Yeah. I mean, I don't know if any other ground force—well, I know there's been some talk that the Saudis, maybe possibly the UAE, might join because they've certainly been hit pretty hard. I think that's possible, but I doubt there are many people who'd be quaking in their boots over a field army from Saudi Arabia or any other Gulf, GCC country for that matter. I mean, look what happened with Yemen and the Houthis—Saudi Arabia couldn't bring them to heel for about a decade. So I don't think there's a lot of fear there. That would just expand the conflict and make sure all these countries got hit worse. And I think one of the things that might mitigate against that—I'd just be guessing.

I don't know this for a fact—I haven't seen any evidence of it—but I'm just thinking logically. If I were Iran, I might say, "If any of you join this with either your air force or any ground force, I hope you have a lot of bottled water, because you're going to need it. I'm going to take out your water supply, because now that you've become an existential threat to us on the ground, we'll take whatever military means we need to." And that means taking away your ability to provide water to your forces or your population. I don't know that they would actually do that, but that threat alone might be enough to hold them at bay, because it's a very real threat and a vulnerability for all the GCC countries.

## **#Nima**

Because not only bringing in other forces to work with the Americans, but we know what the experience was in Ukraine, for example—all these mercenaries joining the army, and there was no proper communication. That would bring huge challenges for the military as well. And I remember once Colonel Wilkerson said that the U.S. experience in the Middle East, with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, when they had NATO forces joining the United States, showed there were a lot of problems with communication between and among the forces.

## **#Daniel**

I'd say there's not as much of an issue with NATO, because English is primarily the language and we have a lot of uniformity in capabilities. I had two combat deployments in Afghanistan and worked a lot with international forces. I never personally had any difficulty with that—it's always a challenge, of course. I do remember during Desert Storm, though, when the Egyptians were actually on our side. There was an Egyptian mechanized force not far from ours.

And there was some concern for a period of time that the communications between the two were such that, because Egypt had a lot of the same kind of kit the Iraqis had, we might think that was an Iraqi force and end up taking them under fire. So we were very careful about that, but there was obviously a distinct communication issue. I think those are things that could be worked out. There'll be challenges, but I don't think that by itself is any kind of real limiting factor.

## **#Nima**

All we've heard so far is about the islands in the Persian Gulf—you know, Kharg Island, the nearby islands, and Qeshm, as you mentioned, in the Strait of Hormuz. But do you think there's any sort of plan to go into mainland Iran?

## **#Daniel**

The only thing I can see there at the present time—and let me caveat that—is if somebody says, “Hey, you know what? We have intelligence, we know where all 400-plus kilograms of the 60-percent reprocessed nuclear material is. It's in a bunker at this location, and we're going to use an air insertion to seize it.” Something like that—a point target. Kind of like when they tried to get Maduro out of Venezuela, something similar, where you're going after a specific target. You've got all these assets, you go in big, hit them hard, get the target, and leave. Something like that. But in terms of something like Iraq in 2003 or 1991—right now we don't even have the assets. So at this point, that's not even a theoretical possibility. We'd have to get an army on the ground to do that.

## **#Nima**

And as I remember from the war in Ukraine, you have to have some sort of three-to-one advantage if you go on the offensive—unless you just decide to capture some islands and stay there, which doesn't make much sense if you're not going on the offensive.

## **#Daniel**

Yeah, these small numbers here—like I said at the beginning—it wouldn't make any... what would you gain if you had Kharg Island or this other one in the Horseshoe Bend? I mean, there's no gain to it. It's not like that's what Iran needs to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed. That wouldn't even be a factor. There are so many other ways they could do it, so it wouldn't solve any of that problem. And, as a general rule of thumb, you need a three-to-one ratio for an offensive. But as the Russians have shown in several places, they don't have a three-to-one advantage, and yet they still continue to advance. You'd probably also have local superiority—you don't have to have it across the whole country, just in targeted locations.

If you wanted to go into a certain place, you'd want overmatch there, but you don't have to have overmatch everywhere. So it's not necessarily a hard-and-fast rule. But it doesn't matter, quite frankly, whatever percentages you'd want to have—it's just a fool's errand to think you're going to have any kind of ground operation that would produce anything of even operational effectiveness, much less a strategic one. I mean, all you'd do is get yourself sucked deeper into a war you can't win, one that would cause long-term casualties. And look, we have capable forces; we could do some things if we really put our minds to it. You could make an incursion into Iran—there are several places you could go in, at high cost, but you could do it for a period of time.

But again, toward what end? You're not going to conquer Tehran. You're not going to march on Tehran. You're just not going to do it. There's no path—literally no physical path—to do so. You'd end up impaling your army in the mountain passes and giving all the advantages to the defending Iranians if you tried. You might have your army decimated before it even got close. And, of course, that's when my worry would really start to rise—if we got foolish enough to go that far—that the use of tactical nuclear weapons could enter the fray. Because I can certainly see President Trump saying, "Well, I'm not going to have 100,000 or 200,000 Americans killed in action in a war this foolish."

We're just going to toss a couple of nuclear weapons and vaporize the regime in Tehran—something like that. Then I'd really start worrying, because I just can't see President Trump accepting a military defeat when he has nuclear weapons in his pocket, any more than I can see Russia accepting a defeat if we ever had a war with them, with their nuclear weapons—or China, for that matter. I mean, any nation that has them—that's one of the reasons they have them—so they don't suffer a conventional defeat. So God help us all if we start a ground war we can't finish conventionally, because that's going to raise the temptation for something much darker.

## **#Nima**

Before wrapping up, Carl, two days ago I had Professor Ted Postol—our mutual friend—on this podcast. He said that if they use nuclear weapons against Iran, Iran will respond with nukes. He's sure about that, and he said they'll use them—and that would be the end of Israel.

## **#Daniel**

I mean, I've had Ambassador Chas Freeman—another of our mutual friends—on my show, and he thinks that if they haven't already, they're in the process of doing it. He said it would be illogical for them not to at this point. I don't have any evidence of that; I'm just thinking, rationally speaking, it would be nearly foolish if they have the material and the technical and scientific wherewithal not to do it now. I mean, when would you ever do it, if you see that the only thing keeping larger powers from invading smaller ones is the presence of nuclear weapons? So I don't know why they wouldn't do that. Maybe the fatwa is still in effect—I don't know how that works—but rationally speaking, I would expect that. And, you know, maybe that's another surprise the Iranian side has for us. I don't know.

## **#Nima**

Thank you so much, Carl, for being with us today.

## **#Daniel**

Great pleasure, as always. Always my pleasure. I look forward to having you back on our show soon. We really value your advice as well. Sure. Thank you very much. Bye-bye.