

# Patrick Henningsen: The 48-Hour Bluff: Military Says No

This interview argues that the 48-hour ultimatum is more political theater than strategy, reflecting division inside the U.S. military and fears of a costly escalation with Iran. It says any ground invasion would face severe logistical, air-defense, and political obstacles, while prolonging the war mainly benefits elite interests tied to oil, finance, and weapons. The discussion also claims rising energy chaos is hurting ordinary people, straining Europe, and exposing Western hypocrisy over war, law, and diplomacy.

## #Nima

The latest ultimatum from Donald Trump—he's talking again about "48 hours before the hell coming." You know, he's trying to intimidate Iranians. We've had this before: 48 hours before, then five days, then 10 days, right? Now we're back to 48 hours. What happened yesterday, I think, was basically different from what we've seen so far in this war—with fighter jets, with helicopters. And then the day before, we had more than 12 generals dismissed from their positions, or they were forced to resign under the Secretary of War, Pete Haxett. How do you see the situation right now? Let's start with this 48-hour ultimatum. What does it mean, in your opinion?

## #Patrick

Well, I think we can draw a logical conclusion from the timing of this purge of military generals by the Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth. It's pretty obvious—the timing probably has to do with pushback from these generals about a ground invasion or putting U.S. troops on the ground. One of these generals was previously in command of the 82nd Airborne, the very division said to be deployed for combat operations in Iran. So it's clear what's going on: there's pushback within the military. There's no consensus in the U.S. military that this is a good idea, that this war should continue to be prosecuted in this kind of ad hoc, ramshackle, make-it-up-as-you-go-along style that Pete Hegseth and the Trump administration are attempting to pursue.

So they're trying to rewrite the rulebook of military engagement because they believe that, having arrived on the scene, these 14 months mark the beginning of history for them. But this is what happens when you put someone who's not qualified in charge. Probably Pete Hegseth isn't even qualified to lead a battalion in the U.S. military, based on his low rank and the fact that he was kicked out of the D.C. National Guard. I mean, he would never—he wouldn't even get a position within the U.S. military of any average rank. Yet he's been put in charge of the Pentagon at this very

crucial time. So that's probably why they're doubling down—because this is a political war now. For Donald Trump, it's a political war in the U.S., about legitimacy at home, but also legitimacy internationally.

He's staked everything on all these different initiatives—economic wars and military wars—like the tariff war, for instance. His entire reputation, for all of his so-called “terror warfare,” rests on this military operation, as well as his claim to be the president for the economy, because he's supposedly a successful businessman. As we can see, the results economically, at least for average Americans, are going to be really, really difficult, in terms of the inflationary pressure from the spike in oil and the throttling of supplies to the global market out of the Persian Gulf, and the effect that's having on oil markets and economic activity right across the board. So there's all of that going on now.

So I think the timing is very bad for the U.S., but it's a lose-lose, really. If they pull out, then Trump's humiliated. The U.S. is humiliated. The Fox News crowd is humiliated. And they just can't accept that. If they stay in, they're going to incur more losses. What we saw in the last 24 or 48 hours in terms of lost aircraft—it's nothing. I mean, it's just the beginning. If they put boots on the ground, you multiply that by ten or twenty. That's what's going to happen. There is no real feasible military operation. And even if there was, we can talk about the likely insertion points and what the U.S. would do, or hope to achieve—at least publicly—what trophy they could hold up after who knows how many days or weeks of combat operations inside Iran.

But the fact of the matter is, they don't really have any safe staging ground to mount operations. They don't have fallback positions. They don't have any protected supply lines or anything like that. They're banking on this idea that Iran's going to stand down and not do anything if they enter the country—that Iran's just going to defer to the almighty force of the U.S. military, while the U.S. carries out massive bombing runs all over Iran during the invasion. That's the military plan: they'll do saturation bombings with whatever they have left in terms of standoff munitions, which is probably not much. And that's how they're going to provide cover for their military insertion.

They're hoping there's going to be absolutely no resistance from the Iranians. Whether it's an insertion on the southeast coast—that's my best guess. Not necessarily in the Persian Gulf. If anything, this was a probing. Potentially, you know, these are probing exercises around Kuwait. But that's not where the U.S. is, in my opinion, likely to insert ground troops. If they do, it's probably going to be somewhere else. It's not even necessarily Kharg Island. They may try, but it seems like the U.S. is better positioned to invade on the southeastern coast—around Chabahar and the Konarak coast, the Makran coastline of Iran.

It seems to be more of a sensible position—an insertion point—and then they could utilize the CIA, arming and funding the Baluchi terrorist militias in Baluchistan, trying to engineer a breakaway province there. For many years they've probably been preparing to activate them, and hopefully they would join up with U.S. military positions. I mean, that would be the most logical plan from the United States' point of view. So, I mean, there are a whole bunch of different aspects to this that we

could discuss, including what was revealed over the last two days—that there are many, many layers of air defense. It's not just S-400-style air defenses along large perimeters repelling those types of air attacks.

Maybe the U.S. has taken out quite a few radar systems, and Israel has as well. But that doesn't mean Iran doesn't have shorter-range air defenses, and that's going to come into play soon as they move in closer with helicopters and more aircraft to drop glide bombs and carry out bombing runs—because that's all the U.S. can do right now. They have to move in closer and use things like glide bombs to hit targets, because I believe they're running out of cruise missiles and standoff munitions. So that means they're going to be in the firing line of lighter, more decentralized, and mobile air defenses, and could even be targeted by MANPADS and things like that.

I think we saw some of that in the last 24 hours. I mean, that's just pretty basic common sense. They're going to take aircraft losses. How much can they take? This is already a huge political problem in America, believe it or not. A few aircraft losses could potentially delay, if not derail, the U.S. ground invasion—if enough political inertia is generated from New York Times headlines about downed U.S. aircraft and missing pilots. That might be enough to deter this sort of reckless military operation by Donald Trump, Pete Hegseth, and the others. So, we'll see.

## **#Nima**

I think, first of all, they have to send these forces into Iran, as you mentioned, in the southern part—basically the southeast or southwest, but generally the southern part of Iran. They'd have to send them in using helicopters. I don't know how that's even possible. Are they going to rely on these Arab states to, you know, provide them with everything—let them use their land to go into Iran? That would be hugely problematic, in my opinion, because if that happens, Iran would destroy everything in those countries. That's a whole other level of escalation. You know, if the invasion happens—like we've heard before—the head of parliament in Iran literally said they're going to hit everything in those countries. And on the other hand, if they put troops on the ground, let's assume 50,000, that's the number we've heard so far, the number we've seen so far.

Together with air power, I think we're going to see a lot of these fighter jets being hit by the air defense system—not only because of the radars you mentioned. The radars in Iran are mostly mobile; they're not fixed in one location. They move around, go into these underground cities, come out again, move, find targets, and send signals. This is the problem the United States is dealing with, because from the targets we've seen so far, they're basically blind to where these radars, missiles, and missile production sites actually are. They don't know. That's why they're hitting bridges and, you know, pharmaceutical facilities in Iran. I think that's one of the basic problems on the U.S. side. What do you make of it?

## **#Patrick**

Yeah, I think there are always going to be logistical problems. Also, you know, the Iranians can fire at aircraft even using visual technology—the combination of visual, infrared, heat-seeking, and all these other systems. Nima, this is exactly why the Russian Federation hasn't used its air force over Ukraine in four years. Imagine that. You look at the size of Russia's air force—all fifth-generation fighters, very advanced, some of the best pilots in the world. They've run some of the most targeted air campaigns, even in very tight logistical situations, like in Aleppo, for instance.

So Russia's fully capable of running air campaigns, but they haven't in Ukraine. Why is that? Because of the risks. It's because of the risks. And America's going to face those same risks when they start moving in closer. See, what you have is the Trump administration—the currency for this presidency is memes. I'm telling you, it's memes, soundbites, headlines, tweets, and lies. And they've been lying about this military campaign to the American public and to the world. They've been talking like the U. S. has been loitering over Iranian cities with aircraft the whole time. It's not true.

The majority of the attacks on Iran have been carried out with long-distance cruise missiles and other standoff munitions, targeting from submarines or U.S. destroyers parked well over 1,200 kilometers from the Iranian coast—so, at a safe distance. That's the majority. And then, of course, there's some high-altitude bombing, but only just. Now, because of the logistical problems with this, they'll have to move in closer in order to continue to, quote, "hit targets" and things like that. They're going to become more vulnerable to targeting from various levels and types of air defense. They've been able to avoid that so far, for the most part.

And I think they've gotten overconfident. Now they've realized it, and this is why it's going to be a problem. This is a huge political crisis right now. I'm telling you, when this hits the headlines of the New York Times, everyone's talking about it, and everyone's doubting Pete Hegseth—which they're already doing—and looking for different excuses or ways to remove him. Meanwhile, he's panicking and desperate because he's been given a do-or-die order from the Israeli lobby: you will prosecute this war, otherwise you're finished. So Pete Hegseth's career, his future, totally hinges on his ability to have a normal life and stay out of prison—it really hinges on keeping this war going.

In that sense, Pete Hegseth has become a kind of Zelensky character—sort of a clown, sort of a stage actor. He's a TV presenter; that's his main career, TV presenting. Like President Trump, he's a reality TV actor. And, you know, whatever they think they've carved out in the world of politics, they feel they have to double down. They have to keep this war going, like Zelensky, and they just want to keep it going indefinitely. This is suiting them. We can talk about why this is suiting the U.S. empire. I think this is the strategy the U.S. empire wants in Iran, in the Persian Gulf, as well as in Ukraine, because it's having a net effect on the global energy market that, at least in the short term, has provided a tremendous amount of leverage for the United States.

Russia has banned gasoline exports because of the damage to its refineries and export facilities caused by Ukrainian drone attacks. That's happening in the background of all this. So the U.S. uses its proxy—Ukraine—to damage Russian export capacity, and successfully so. They've knocked it

down 30%, possibly 40% at the moment. Until it's repaired, that will take months. And Israel has knocked out Iranian capacity, and then, in retaliation, Iran has knocked out Gulf capacity. So between the U.S. and Israel, they've initiated a kind of downgrading, if you will, of the global oil and gas export market. And the beneficiary—the direct beneficiary—is U.S. oil and gas. Direct.

They are the direct beneficiary. They have control over Venezuela's petroleum at the moment. They've also now knocked out a significant amount in the Persian Gulf and in Russia. So, you know, it's absolutely a leveraged position for the United States empire, as it were. That's the big picture. It leads me to believe they want to keep dragging this on as long as possible. And Israel and the U.S. are quite happy to degrade the Gulf—quite happy. They think they can ride this out, then create more leverage, maybe another conflict or flashpoint, or some other situation where they can increase their leverage. That's how they're thinking in Washington right now. They're stepping back.

## **#Nima**

You mean the elites of the market—the top one percent, those people, not the ordinary ones.

## **#Patrick**

Yes, correct. It's bad for the American people. It means we pay the inflation tax, and the Europeans are paying the inflation tax. It's bad for the people; it's bad for the economies of everyone except the upper 1% or the 0.1%. And that is Donald Trump's base. Donald Trump has lost many of the active-duty military—they don't support him. I know because I've been on the ground interviewing them over the last two weeks. Many veterans have also withdrawn their support. Trump's lost them. The MAGA base—they've peeled off. He's lost half of them. He's lost all of the independents, almost 100%. Almost 100% of independent votes.

That was the swing vote for Trump in the last election—he wouldn't have won without them. He got their vote because he lied and pretended to be an anti-war president. It was a very good acting job by Donald Trump. So, what's left? Wall Street, Howard Lutnick's people, big oil, big gas in Texas, big AI, big tech—and Wall Street again. That's it. That's Trump, and the media, most of the mainstream media class. That's it. There's no popular base anymore. It's finished. That's what people have to realize. It's a fraction of what it was during the 2024 election campaign. So, time is not going to be kind to Trump politically. But do the Israelis really care what the Republicans do in their midterms?

I don't think so. They've already set this story in motion, and Wall Street's happy. They're making money every time Trump sends out a tweet. So is his inner circle. So are his children. So is his son-in-law. They're all making a fortune every time he posts on Truth Social, because they'll put their call options in, watch the stock market go up, then wait a few hours for Iran to say, "We're not negotiating anything with the U.S.—what's this man talking about?" And then, all of a sudden, the market drops and oil prices go back up. He and his people and his base—which are Wall Street, big AI, big military, and big oil—they're making money on the dip as well as on the rebound.

And on the dip again—they're making money. The financial markets have been weaponized around oil trading and these commodities, so much so that there's even a whole wing of cryptocurrency trading we've exposed at 21stCenturyWire.com. It's on our website right now; it's called \*Hormuz Hype\*. We've got a report breaking it down. They've gamed the price of petroleum in Europe. The European market shouldn't even be affected—they only get about 7% of their oil from the Persian Gulf, Nima. The majority of European oil doesn't come from the Persian Gulf; that's just a talking point from the Trump administration. It comes from Norway—that's where most of Europe's oil comes from.

## **#Nima**

Norway, which goes to Poland and...

## **#Patrick**

Well, that's a gas pipeline as well. But then Kazakhstan, Nigeria, and a little bit from Libya—that's the majority, that's the bulk—and the United States. That's the bulk of European oil at the moment. They're getting some from Russia, but less than before, obviously. So the main oil companies, the energy companies, are jacking up their price fixing to take advantage of the crisis and maximize profits. It's a big scandal right now in Europe. We're one of the few outlets that have put a great report together. I work with a French journalist, Freddie Ponton, who's done tremendous work on this topic and others.

But that's a report on our website right now. The same is true in America, Nima. The United States—oil is priced globally, you know—but it shouldn't, in terms of supply, affect the U.S. market at all. It shouldn't. But the big firms run a cartel, and they pretend to react to geopolitical events in order to maximize profits at the pump in real time, even though the downstream effects shouldn't show up for months when it comes to the price of petrol or gasoline in the U.S. I mean, it's ridiculous. But they're doing it. They're doing it to gain. And this is what's happened.

And futures markets are piling in. Now the crypto trading is also pressurizing these betting markets and, again, driving more volatility and more profit. So the markets—they're just moving. The capital is moving right now in the energy markets. That's where it is. They're taking advantage. And then, when this crisis is over, they're going to move to another. The capital will then migrate to another market—bailout or whatever Ponzi scheme the Federal Reserve might be running to provide a rescue package for this disaster that Trump has gotten his own country and the world into.

## **#Nima**

This is what these people do.

## **#Patrick**

They're absolute criminals. They're crooks. And they don't care. They don't care about the working class. The working class is getting destroyed right now. And the middle class—jobs, all these things—are going to be hit too. So, of course, this is going to hurt him, Trump, politically in the midterms. But the people who paid for this presidency are, unfortunately, the Israeli lobby. They don't care. They really don't care. They'll move on to work with a Democrat-led government. You know, this is how it works. So until people wake up in America and realize how badly they've been played—and will continue to be played along these lines—I think we just have to wait for the next crisis, really. That's kind of where it's at.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Actually, we've learned that Iran is making its first oil sale to India in seven years, with no payment problems. India says it can no longer rely on oil from the Arab states because of the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. And we know the price of oil has at least doubled since the war started. I think that reality is somehow changing the mindset of the Europeans. The foreign minister of Austria has been talking with the foreign minister of Iran about how they can manage the passage of tankers related to Austria that need to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Something is happening in that sense. The Europeans—we had Macron the same way. Macron, by the way, the way he's behaving is totally different from what we saw in Ukraine, for example. You know, he sees the leverage Iran has in the Strait of Hormuz. What's your understanding? What do you make of the way Iran's policy in the Strait of Hormuz is somehow changing the nature of the relationship among those countries that need the Strait to pass through?

## **#Patrick**

In terms of Emmanuel Macron inserting himself into this situation, I don't put a lot of weight on it, also because he's very inconsistent. He's done this with Russia before—he flip-flops, literally days or weeks after. That's actually his hallmark: he's a flip-flopper. That's Macron. And the typical French political negotiation style is to be engaged, to talk.

## **#Nima**

I'm 100% agreeing with you.

## **#Patrick**

Yeah, 100%—really engaged in it, talking it up: "It's going to be great, it's going to be wonderful." And then they always back out at the end. Always. This is just a French, high-level, corporate style of negotiation. Then they'll try to do an end run around themselves with somebody else, possibly to

get a better price. Who knows? So, as far as Macron goes, that's how I view him—this type of figure. What Macron's done is make himself relevant on the world stage by doing nothing. Just by making a statement, everyone's like, "Wow, that sounds very multipolar."

Oh, he's the future—finally, some leadership from Europe. But he's really doing this for a domestic audience, because this war is hugely unpopular in France, and also among Muslims in France as well. And this has not gone unnoticed. So this is a president who's joined at the hip with Benjamin Netanyahu and has been totally supportive of the Gaza genocide. France has done whatever Israel wants, pretty much. So this has also hurt him politically—his brand has been tarnished. He doesn't want to make the same mistake here. You can see Europeans are not very, you know, they're not pro-Trump.

Even the right wing in Europe is going sour on Trump, just because of the level—the crudeness, the sort of disgusting, rude, sloppy, uh, you know, way that he goes about his political business. Disrespectful to smaller countries, constantly jibing European states, saying they're not pulling their weight in NATO, which is ridiculous. NATO is just a big protection racket for the U.S. to sell weapons. They create the threat and then sell protection to the European countries, demanding that they spend 3% of GDP to defend themselves. Defend themselves against what? Against an "aggressive" Russia that only appears aggressive because the United States staged a violent coup in Kiev in February 2014 that started a civil war and led to the war we have now.

That's a U.S. operation from beginning to end. And they'll turn to the Europeans and say, you know, you've got to buy more weapons because the Russians are dangerous, they want to invade. And most Europeans will believe that. You have, say, not very intelligent European leaders like Kaja Kallas, like the new prime minister of Finland, Mr. Stubb, and, of course, Poland. There's a faction in Poland that has always found it very profitable to talk up a Russian threat and to try to cultivate Russian hate from previous generations—from the Soviet era, the Warsaw Pact days.

## **#Nima**

You're talking about the Kaczyński ilk.

## **#Patrick**

Yeah, exactly. It's a great career move. That's all American money—American money injected into the Polish political system. So if you have those views, it's very profitable. It's good for your career. You get on all the panels, you get the fellowships at the think tanks, you do your time in America, and then you get a nice cushy corporate banking job in New York or wherever—on the board of whichever company. That's the career trajectory in Poland. It's just an example of how screwed up Europe is. They don't even know what's good for themselves.

So they're looking at this situation in Iran, and now in Italy and Spain the governments are coming under direct pressure from their electorates about allowing their military bases—of which there are many U.S. bases under the guise of NATO. This is, again, part of the scam. The U.S. criticizes NATO, saying they're not pulling their weight, but the U.S. uses NATO as a fig leaf to maintain hundreds of military bases and facilities all over Europe. Then they use those as launching pads for illegal wars of aggression outside of NATO. That's what it is. So, you know, Meloni and the governments in Italy and Spain are coming under pressure from their electorates on this—people don't want to be part of this illegal war.

They don't want to have World War III blood on their hands if this thing spins out of control. And so, yeah, you know, in a way, a lot's being revealed—a lot is being revealed through Trump. Through his kind of recklessness, and through the crazy bombast of the Pete Hegseths of the world, a lot's being revealed. Now it's pushed relationships right to the edge. And Europeans especially have to basically look in the mirror and say, do we have any of these ethical, moral, or international law considerations that we've been so pious and sanctimonious about over the Ukraine conflict? Does any of this apply in reality when it comes to the United States? And that's why they're backing off. If they're engaged, they have to then deal with all of that hypocrisy.

That means banning Russia from sporting events and the Olympics, sanctioning them, and kicking Russian people and businesses out of Europe—all this other stuff based on the claim that Russia did a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which it didn't. Even then, that was under the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2202 and the Minsk Accords. So Russia was merely intervening on a humanitarian basis, as was expected if the Minsk Accords and that UN Security Council resolution collapsed. And it did. The rest was fairly academic to anyone who was actually watching and paying attention to the Ukraine civil war.

But Europe remodeled all that, remarketed it as Russian aggression. And that suited the U.S. under the last administration, under Joe Biden. They used it to re-leverage U.S. positions in Europe and to try to destroy Russia economically, creating this bifurcated global system—which has largely failed. And now here we go, another front has opened up. Where are all those great platitudes now? Where are the speeches? I don't see them anymore. They've all disappeared. The Europeans are hiding—they're running behind the filing cabinets in Brussels. They're hiding.

They don't know what to do about Daddy. Daddy's gone off the reservation. They don't know what to say. So it's brilliant on one level, because this is just another layer of hypocrisy that's exposed Israel, the United States, and the European elite leadership for what they are—absolute charlatans. They don't have a moral or ethical bone left in their bodies anyway. So it's terrible. The whole situation is terrible. Don't get me wrong—it's terrible. But it has exposed everything. And that, I think, could be a positive in the long run, if we survive this crisis.