80 US Air Force Tankers AMASS as Iran Rains HELLFIRE on Hormuz | Mark Sleboda

The US and Israeli build up to another round of strikes on Iran that's happening in front of our eyes is being concealed by talks of intense mediation efforts from Qatar and other regional actors. Geopolitical analyst Mark Sleboda joins the show to discuss what this build up actually looks like, what it means for the geopolitical landscape, and provides his expert military analysis on the theaters of war from West Asia/Middle East to Ukraine. https://boosty.to/therealpolitick SUPPORT MARK HERE SUPPORT THE SHOW BY BECOMING A YOUTUBE MEMBER: https://www.youtube.com /channel/UCOxLhz6B_elvLflntSEfnzA/join PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong. substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho Follow me on Telegram: https://t.me/dannyhaiphong #iran #israel #trump

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by Mark Sloboda, geopolitical analyst and military affairs expert, on this Halloween, October 31st. We're going to go over some spooky, maybe not so spooky developments, but certainly concerning ones, Mark. Indirect talks through mediators, especially led by Qatar, it seems right now, are all over media reports. Many are wondering if this is just more fake diplomacy, as Israel's Channel 14 reports that over 80 KC-135 refueling tankers are now on the ground in Israel, ready to support a coming strike. This is Barak Ravid, whose word we can't always trust, talking about the mediation. But nevertheless, MS NOW, formerly MSNBC, reports that Trump plans to resume strikes on Iran the day after the midterm elections.

So it could come as soon as November 4th, with sources telling Barak Ravid that Trump may be more inclined to launch a major military operation tomorrow if the GOP loses badly in the midterm elections, which seems to be very likely. And now we also have reports that Iran is really just raining hellfire in the Strait of Hormuz. They're doing so now with speedboats and launching mines from them at vessels, hitting five in the last day alone. That has, of course, kept oil prices high and economic pressure on the United States very much in place. So, Mark, what's going on here? What does it mean for so many refueling tankers to be sitting in Israel right now, after days of loading Israel with air defenses and other equipment for an attack? What do 80 refueling tankers mean?

#Mark Sleboda

Danny, thanks for having me. Happy All Hallows' Eve to everyone out there. As a goth at heart, it has always been my favorite holiday. So you'll forgive the festivities, of course. Anyway.

#Danny

So, you know, we've been told...

#Mark Sleboda

Now that the U.S. is going to bomb Iran, it'll be a short, concentrated, intense campaign, or at least that's what they want. Of course, Iran gets a say in how short it is, you know, the length of any campaign, and also gets a say in the whole escalation spiral or ladder, depending on how you want to visualize it as well. But we've been told this for months now, right? That it's coming, that it's coming, that it's coming. And we've seen a military buildup. We've seen the air bridge, you know, with the transports coming from the U.S. to Europe, to the Middle East, back and forth, arming Israel, bringing supplies there and into Jordan.

And remember that the U.S., for the most part, has retreated from most of its bases in the Middle East since the start of the first military campaign that launched this war, due to Iran's successful strategy, the IRGC strategy of debasification. They hit the U.S. military bases hard, and they forced them to withdraw from across the Middle East, primarily now to Jordan and to Israel, right? That's where the U.S. is concentrated. It's also important to keep in mind that in the first kinetic phase of this conflict, the U.S. had considerably more assets to use in such a conflict than they do now, because Iran has destroyed them. And in particular, we're talking about high-powered radars around these bases in the Middle East that now no longer exist, right? A significant number of them.

And that is going to make any attack on Iran and defense against Iran's retaliatory strikes much more difficult, actually, right? The U.S. is, of course, working with a considerably emptier quiver in terms of air defense interceptors, standoff munitions, Tomahawks, and JASSMs—air-launched cruise missiles. All of that is going to be considerably less effective than it was the first time around, right? You know, even considering that the U.S., at least for a time, is scheduled to have three aircraft carrier groups, that would line up with the first attack. But again, they'll be playing with fewer assets than they did last time. They've also been talking about what happens if this campaign is launched, and we're assured over and over again that it's going to happen, but that no decision has been made.

And I've also heard in the Western mainstream media that Trump has gone through more than six military plans at this point for attacks on Iran and/or Ansar Allah in Yemen, and has reportedly considered each successive plan for a while and then rejected it, back and forth and back again. And that has, of course, included dropping a MOAB on Pickaxe Mountain, the site of the Fordow nuclear enrichment facility. And it has to be said that that's not going to do anything. That's theatrics. It is good for destroying ground targets, right, surface targets, but it has no penetrative power, right? And one has to presume that at the first sign of any U.S. attack, the site, you know, on the surface, is going to be completely evacuated and, you know, hardened.

And then, of course, a MOAB has to get into Iranian airspace. In fact, we received word in the last week—you've probably already covered it on your show—that Iran supposedly received a request from the Trump administration via mediators: "Can we just drop a MOAB on Pickaxe Mountain and you not hit back at us while we try to do so?" Which, of course, harkens back to theatrics that we've seen during the last administration, the Blinken-Sullivan administration, when they went out of their way to avoid exactly what Trump walked right into, which was direct war with Iran in the Middle East. And in order to manage Israel, several behind-the-scenes deals were done with Iran, again through mediators, so that the U.S. and Iran would both carry out symbolic strikes against each other that would do no real damage.

Both would declare victory and go home and avoid a war. That happened several times during the Blinken-Sullivan administration, and now it would seem that Trump at least tried to do the same thing again. That's what the reports we've heard say. And Iran said, "No, we're not playing those games anymore," right? You wiped out all that leadership that was more amenable to such gestures out of a belief—a naive belief—that they could placate the U.S., and the new leadership doesn't have any such illusions or delusions. We've also heard a lot in the Western media over the last few days that the Trump administration seems to have fixated on the person they believe they need to talk to, who has, you know, shall we say, the levers of power right now.

And that is Mohsen Rezaei, the Iranian head of the Supreme National Security Council and, it must be said, the former head of the IRGC, of course. And they've identified him as the one with, you know, the most power right now in Iran, at least in this situation. And that's, you know, completely understandable. And it also happens to be exactly what I and some others predicted before this war even started: that if the U.S. launched it and attacked the Iranian leadership, the most likely scenario was that the IRGC would emerge as the most powerful political force in control of the country. And that's exactly what has happened. I don't think it's any surprise to anyone. And, you know, potentially a supreme leader who is the son of the former one that Netanyahu and Trump murdered—assassinated.

And he himself was injured, you know, reportedly severely, in the process, and his wives, children, mothers—you know, the entirety of his family—were killed. So I have to presume that that would make someone, you know, not necessarily amenable to a peaceful or diplomatic resolution to all of this. So Vance, the U.S. vice president, has obviously been picked this time around as the front man to reach out to Rezaei. And reportedly, he has sent Rezaei a letter with the U.S. terms, which also include Iran giving up all of its nuclear enrichment right at the start of negotiations, before they even talk about anything else. Meanwhile, Iran has made clear that their position is exactly the opposite: that there will be no giving up of any nuclear enrichment at all. You know, that is their right under international law as signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But also, the U.S. must meet all of the conditions that they previously agreed to in the memorandum of understanding, including releasing all of Iran's stolen money, their assets. All sanctions against Iran must be removed, war reparations must be paid, and so forth. And unlike the memorandum of

understanding, that must all happen up front, before any talks actually commence. So, I mean, both sides have retreated into, shall we say, or reorganized back into absolute maximalist demands. And Netanyahu is going off. Of course, it is in the context of an electoral campaign, a hard-fought election campaign in Israel. But once again, he's only talking about regime change in Iran, wiping out the Iranian leadership. Iranian leadership—what are we on? Do we want to call it 2.0, 2.1, something like that? So that's not very...

#Mark Sleboda

It doesn't bode well for the idea that this is largely bluff and bluster leading up to a TACO moment, and then some new deal being announced, you know, some new meetings being announced or anything. I mean, there's always the possibility, because it is very hard—well, it's not necessarily about getting inside Trump's head or understanding the U.S. strategy, because there is no U.S. strategy. And we know that. I mean, that's been repeatedly pointed out in the Western mainstream media: Trump goes from military options to diplomatic options to walking away, back and forth all over again, depending on who he talked to most recently.

When was the last time Netanyahu was in the U.S., physically whispering in his ear? Did he talk to Vance today? Did he talk to military chiefs? Did he see something on Fox News that set him off? Did he see a piece of AI slop online that motivated him in a particular way? Because, you know, that, unfortunately, is the rather mercurial, quixotic beast that Iran is dealing with in the person of Donald Trump. There is no strategy. He's doing everything by the seat of his pants, all right, and tacking from zeitgeist to zeitgeist as he attempts to keep the ship of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran afloat.

We've also had word in the last week that this supposed iron wall of a U.S. blockade of Iranian ports is, as we long suspected, rhetoric, and there's little reality to it. We've had word that Iran has managed to maintain imports of critical components for missiles and other high-tech items, and anything else it might need, through intermediaries and front companies. Reuters has reported that that has, you know, continued largely uninterrupted. So no such shortages exist. And we're also told, in the last week, that Iran is managing to get tankers of gas—liquefied natural gas—out, you know. They don't give us a specific number, but it seems to be a considerable amount.

We're not told exactly how many tankers have gotten out and through the U.S. blockade. And that may or may not have been done with actual U.S. cognizance of that. That's, of course, how worried Trump has been about the price of energy in its various forms, whether we're talking oil or natural gas or diesel as a refined product, coming onto the market as he walks into, you know, the slaughter that I am sure the Republican Party is going to face in midterm elections this next week. So, I mean, Iran is not going to benefit either way and should not take into account, I think, how Trump emerges from the midterm elections.

It was suggested in the media reports that you prefaced this with that Iran fears that if Trump does very badly, he may lash out. And, you know, that will increase the certainty and possibly the

intensity of any attacks on Iran in the immediate aftermath of the midterms. But the opposite is also true. He may feel ebullient and empowered if, you know, let's say, miracle of all miracles, the polls turn out to be wrong—which, you know, has happened before—and he emerges fairly well from the midterms. Let's not talk about a miracle. Let's talk about, you know, fairly well. He could feel empowered as a result of that, and the very same thing could happen. You know, delving into the psychology of Trump is a quick stare into the abyss of madness. I no longer want to play that game personally.

It doesn't really seem to help as an analyst. Maybe get a psychoanalyst online to discuss it. It might bring us better results. So I think we need to step back from the persona of Trump and just consider the U.S. as an entity and a state in realist terms: a hegemon trying in vain to hang on to a hegemony in the region that is quickly slipping out of its grasp as a result of its own strategic blunder in launching this war to begin with. So we see this simultaneous thrust of what is headlined as last-minute diplomatic efforts or ultimatums, or what comes across as Vance pleading with Rezaei to sit down to talks again, at the same time as we see this military buildup.

And we've seen this exact same simultaneous thrust in each of the two previous major kinetic phases of this war. So that doesn't necessarily tell us whether anything's definitely going to happen or not. Unfortunately, a lot of it may simply depend on Trump's mood coming out of this. And again, we do understand that the U.S. is dealing with less than a full deck. And I'm not only talking mentally, in terms of desperation, although that too. But, you know, these military assets, the radars, the munitions and everything—all of that is going to limit them.

And Israel has managed to sit the last few months of this out and let the U.S. take the fall completely. But they would only have been able to rejuvenate their forces to a certain extent because of munition production rates being so low. We're also simultaneously told by the Western mainstream media that Iran has managed to restore all of its missile stockpiles and its missile launcher stockpiles, which is perhaps even more important. And, you know, presumably their drone production in facilities deep under some of their fortress mountain cities has not slackened off either, and they are replacing those drones.

And we are repeatedly told—whether it is true or not, of course, we don't know—that Iran is receiving cruise missiles, other types of missiles, and more high-tech drones, like the Geran-4 or Geran-5 jet-powered drones, from Russia. And we haven't seen any evidence of that so far, at least not that has been made publicly available, but it could be true. So certainly, I think we can bet that Russia and China are doing anything and everything possible to help Iran get what it needs in material and technological terms, short of weapons, right? And again, possibly weapons too. We don't know. But anything short of that, there can be no doubt now.

No doubt that Iran has extensive satellite intelligence-sharing help from at least Russia, and possibly China as well. There's no way that the Iranians and Ansar Allah would have been able to carry out such consistently precise attacks on U.S. facilities, and Saudi infrastructure as well, without that kind

of intelligence sharing. You know, that consistent, that accurate? No, that is satellite intelligence, and that has to come from Russia. So that is, of course, a bit of Russia's payback against the U.S. and its allies for everything that they have done in Ukraine. But it's also, of course, genuinely a show of geopolitical support for the government in Iran from the Kremlin as well.

#Danny

Yeah, well, great points, Mark. And I wanted to follow up on what you just said. I agree with you: looking into the head of Donald Trump is maybe the wrong way to go, because what we always have is what's actually building up and what the United States is actually doing, along with Israel, to build up to war. I'm curious about your thoughts on all this talk about talks. We know that the United States has said many times that negotiations, in many ways, are going to be determined by Iran's response to military action. As you said, they've become fixated on who to talk to when it comes to Iran. Well, J.D. Vance recently sent a letter to Mohsen Rezaei, and Rezaei just said that he's read it, but he hasn't responded to it yet. Mark, your thoughts on this equation that the U.S. seems to have been drawing?

You know, in the Ukraine conflict, I know that there have also been attempts by Steve Witkoff, for example, to go to Russia and say to Putin, "Hey, here's what we want." It just ends up being the same rehashed positions that Russia will never, ever accept. And I feel like we're in a similar loop with Iran. Every time J.D. Vance or somebody else supposedly communicates through mediators—because I think all of it is mostly indirect—it seems that the loop is the same, and that the demands on Iran amount to capitulation. This letter, I guess, shows that they do not have a phone line to the top levels of Iranian governance. And some even believe that Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia were communicating this as well, almost begging Iran to accept that. Your thoughts on this equation and why the U.S. keeps on pushing it?

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah. So first of all, it is important, I think, to understand that there could, of course, be an ulterior motive behind all of these attempts to contact Rezaei. And that could be for decapitation strikes, right? That could simply be to, you know, establish his location and also the location of the new Iranian supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, because the very same Western media sources that tell us that the U.S. has decided that Rezaei is the one to talk to also say that he is in regular communication with Mojtaba Khamenei. And any attempt to contact him could, you know, of course, be part of attempts to lure him out and potentially even ascertain the location of the supreme leader for the next round of decapitation strikes as well.

So that is something that the Iranian leadership, of course, has to consider very carefully when they decide how, and if at all, to respond to these latest U.S. diplomatic signals that come alongside their military signals. And, you know, if it's not that—and we have every reason to believe that it is, because, of course, that is what happened the first time around—Trump and other U.S. leaders still

repeatedly talk about wiping out the Iranian leadership again. That is something that Netanyahu talks about too.

And, you know, of course, Iran will be able to weather that as they did the first time. Successors, once again, I'm sure, have been picked. And we received word during the week that the Mosaic defense strategy has been reactivated and new target lists have been created and sent out to all of the various military commands to enable them to respond to any military attacks independently, without constant coordination and orders coming down from military or political leadership higher up. And we know that that was extremely effective for Iran, enabling them to weather the first stages of the decapitation strikes last time around.

But it's also, you know, a clear sign that the U.S. leadership is divided. We can put the person of Trump aside for a moment and understand that, yes, he changes his mind every 15 minutes, which is why, you know, at some level we can possibly understand the simultaneous military buildup and frantic diplomatic outreach. Why the same terms again and again? It's obviously because the U.S. can't accept the geopolitical losses entailed in the memorandum of understanding that they originally agreed to. You know, the U.S. never had any intention of fulfilling that.

It was playing for time to try to stabilize the oil markets as much as possible and to try to geopolitically peel Oman off from Iran. You know, it's clear now that that's what they were trying to do the first time around, after the first 40 days of this conflict. And, you know, there's every possibility that that could happen again. But ultimately, the U.S. cannot just walk away from this war, leaving Iran with control over the Strait of Hormuz that it did not have, or at least did not exert, before the war on Iran began. There's no way that even Trump can spin that as an American victory.

And, you know, the pressure continues to build on oil markets. There's been all this talk of increased oil getting out over a several-week period, even as Iran is hitting more ships going through the Strait of Hormuz, again confirmed by Western sources. The UKMTO even admitted that they can't properly estimate how many ships are being hit. It's more than their official numbers, and they admit that themselves, because many of the ships that are being hit are refusing to report it, presumably because they're operating, you know, under U.S. and Gulf Arab instructions not to, right? That's why they're being paid enormous salaries, you know, to risk themselves. Doubtless, they're being paid.

The insurance is being covered by the U.S. There's an immense financial cost involved in continuing to try to push that many ships through, right? And that is reflected both in the fact that the price of oil is not dropping and that the price of maritime transit keeps increasing, not decreasing. And we've also been told in the last couple of weeks that there is now a global shortage of tankers, of VLCCs, even of cargo ships. And it's happening at the very same time, of course, that NATO is losing a very large number of transport cargo ships in the Black Sea. In fact, the Wall Street Journal declared this week that the Black Sea is the world's most dangerous shipping route right now, even more dangerous than the Strait of Hormuz in terms of the number of ships being sunk.

And that's like, wow. And that's because Russia has now begun a very active war of hunting down NATO shadow fleet ships, right? To use their terminology, you know, privately owned ships flying third-party flags of convenience to attempt to bring NATO military supplies to the Kiev regime in Ukraine through the de facto Russian long-range strike blockade. That, along with what's happening in the Strait of Hormuz and the Houthis' occasional action in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait against ships carrying Saudi energy, keeps adding to the number of ships affected globally. And we now have a global shortage of such ships.

And of course, that raises the premium for, you know, purchasing transit for your goods on those ships, above and beyond the cost of the actual insurance, crew, and captain as well. So despite the fact that supposedly more oil is getting out, we know that all those numbers they're tossing around include oil getting out by other means from Gulf countries. They're saying, "More oil than before." That's like, yeah, but that's not just the Strait of Hormuz. That's also oil getting out via the east-west pipeline, when it actually is functioning right now, but also overland from Iraq as well.

And we know that Iraq has also been quietly paying Iran money to get some of its oil out, to allow some of its tankers to slip through, even through the southern corridor, as long as Iraq pays Iran reportedly up to 20 or 30% of the price of the cargo of oil that they're shipping out as well. So there's a lot of underhanded and dirty games. Both sides are also using ship-to-ship transfers to get by each other's blockades, as it were, to an extent. And that also, of course, involves criminal networks and everything else on both sides. The whole geopolitical, geoeconomic game of chicken, the whole dueling blockades, is a lot grayer and a lot nastier and dirtier than people think it is. It's all extremely complicated and a lot more porous on both sides, I would guess.

#Danny

I wanted to just pull up the reported cost. Now, this is just the cost The Wall Street Journal laid out of what the United States is putting in to get out whatever amount of oil supposedly is getting out of the Strait of Hormuz, which, admittedly, is not much. But yet: 50,000 troops, 20 Navy ships, two carriers, $2.3 billion a month, $67 to $100 million a day above normal military spending—you know, in normal times. Aircraft, warships, and crews are under mounting strain, and there are desperate attempts to seek coalition efforts to take over the job of so-called opening the Strait of Hormuz, which has not gone well at all. Mark, you know, we can weave Ukraine in here, too, but I know you're a well-known optimist. Do you find that the midterm elections are such a focus here?

It's like, oh, Trump will attack maybe the day after the midterm elections, Gulf officials are saying. But do the midterm elections really change anything about how the U.S. as an entity prosecutes war? Because you probably saw Chris Murphy talking about this insane war plan and voicing opposition to it. Yet there hasn't been a concerted effort to stop Trump and his administration from pursuing this war beyond a War Powers Act that has not passed. And there's also, if we weave Ukraine into the broader geopolitical picture, the fact that a lot of the opposition to the Iran war on the Democratic Party side is because they want to fight other wars, or they want to fight Russia

harder. Yeah, they want to fight Russia harder. So, your thoughts on all this election hysteria? We're only a few days away from it.

#Mark Sleboda

Okay, just quickly, you also alluded to the strain that the U.S. Navy is under in maintaining this increasingly porous blockade, keeping all of these ships and sailors at sea, and the immense logistical costs involved. The strain of doing that is particularly great since the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet naval base and headquarters in Bahrain has been destroyed, and they have to maintain logistics lines from, you know, Diego Garcia, right? And to and from Israel on the other side in order to sustain that. That's an immense amount of strain. It's very costly, and it's very difficult in terms of the physical strain on both the ships and the crews and, of course, the mental strain on the crews of these ships.

That's very tough. And I say that as an ex-U.S. Navy guy: that can only be maintained for so long. And we know that the chief of naval operations, in internal monthly reports inside the Pentagon, has, you know, voted against continuing or increasing escalation against Iran, with a clear report that the U.S. Navy was under too much strain. So, you know, they're signaling yellow blinking lights, caution and hazard alerts, from within the highest ranks of the U.S. Navy to the Trump administration. And of course, it's just ignoring them. So that's something else to factor in when you realize that any new U.S. attacks on Iran are not going to be stronger than they were before.

However the Trump administration tries to present them, they're dealing with so many new strains and so much loss of assets that they're going to be in a much more difficult position. So they have a weaker hand, you know, going into that combat again. In terms of the U.S. elections, of course, it doesn't change anything. You'll hear lone Democrats make noise against this and so forth, and talk about Trump's plans as insane. But again, as you rightly pointed out, there has been no action from Congress, from Democrats in Congress or otherwise, to try to stop this.

And that's, of course, because they're just as beholden to the lobby, to AIPAC, to the Israeli lobby as the Republicans are, right? And in some individual cases, of course, even more. So while they may have their reservations, right, some of them on both sides of the aisle, it must be said, would prefer to prioritize a proxy war with Russia in Ukraine, which is increasingly devoid of any proxy—you know, a war with Russia in Ukraine—over a war against Iran, right? And the Democrats know that Israel wants this war to continue and wants the U.S. to continue to take the lead in this war against Iran for them.

And they're not going to cross Israel openly to do so. That's why you see no actual action. Now, if Trump continues to stumble badly, they will, at an opportune moment, leap on him like vultures, you know, or hyenas, or whatever type of scavenger you want to pick, and make as much domestic

political hay out of that as they can. But do not make the mistake of interpreting that as, you know, an actual political effort to end the war or to de-escalate the war or anything of the like, again, because they won't ultimately cross the lobby in Washington.

And the lobby wants all of this, of course, to continue. For Trump himself, you know, there is a lot at stake. He is fighting for his grip on power over the U.S. for the remaining two years of his administration. If the Democrats win, as is widely presumed, he's going to have considerably less power. You know, Congress controls the purse strings, and that matters. It doesn't control everything—the executive branch and, more importantly, the security state, which nominally operates under the authority of the executive branch, but not really.

The CIA is its own institution of power in the United States, as are the other factions of the U.S. security state. But nominally, it's supposedly under the control of the executive branch. The purse strings, though, come from Congress. But also, if Trump loses to the Democrats, he's going to be facing impeachment charges for the next two years. That's what each party does against the other now, for repeated administrations in a row. And the Democrats will certainly pursue that against Trump, whatever they may be saying now, you know, or otherwise. Because that has become the normal state of political dysfunction, at least at a domestic partisan level in the U.S. political theater beast. And that is going to occupy a lot of his bandwidth, right? It doesn't mean anything in the short term because the new Congress, of course, won't take power until next year, right?

They won't assume office until January, whatever the results of the election. And there's always a period where there's a question of being a lame duck, but there's also an opportunity to get as much done as possible before you're finally out of office. So it kind of goes in both directions. So it doesn't tell us, you know, that if the Democrats win next week, that is going to put any short-term limits on the U.S.'s political will to follow through on attacks against Iran. It doesn't. In the medium term, however, it does, simply because so much of Trump's personal focus, his political bandwidth and capital, will then be consumed in trying to maintain his grip on power and fight off any attempts to remove him from office.

That is going to be occupying the man. And he doesn't strike me as a man who has a lot of, shall we say, multitasking bandwidth to be able to deal with multiple crises. He seems to get mentally consumed. And the amount of AI slop that he throws out on a weekly basis is as good a guide as any to what is consuming his mental focus and thought process, such as it is. So he tends to get a bit obsessive about anything at any given point in time. And if he's under attack from the Democrats at a domestic level, whether or not they intend to impede operations against Iran in the medium term after January, yeah, that's going to have an effect on him. He and his administration are going to be inward-looking, navel-gazing, inward-focused. And it's going to divert a lot of their efforts away from those operations.

#Danny

Right. Yeah, yeah. Well, in the final 15 minutes or so, Mark, maybe you can give an update on where the Ukraine conflict fits into all of this. Because last I checked, there was supposed to be some ceasefire on strikes against oil refineries. Ukraine and Russia were not supposed to hit them anymore, and then Ukraine hit them. There are also reports of a new Patriot system deal that's going to take years, and Zelensky is not very happy with how long it's going to take. Don't worry about it.

#Mark Sleboda

The Patriots are just noise.

#Danny

Yeah, I was about to say. Well, I think whatever's left is all in Israel right now, and maybe in some Gulf countries. But what are your thoughts on what's going on in the Ukraine conflict, Mark? Please.

#Mark Sleboda

Okay, so quickly, just first: any talk of 500 Patriots sold to the Kiev regime? Yeah, and delivered when? In 2050? That's just noise. I would guess mainly for domestic political consumption in Ukraine, more than anything else, because the U.S. doesn't have the capacity to sell, you know, through the Europeans or anyone else, or to provide 500 Patriots to the regime. And they were sending them hundreds of Patriots before, and it didn't stop Russia's ballistic missiles or hypersonic missiles anyway, right? The U.S. is going to be short of air defense interceptors for both itself and its allies, much less, you know, proxies like the Kiev regime in Ukraine, for years, if not a decade or more into the future, because ultimately it's a military-industrial complex production bottleneck.

And, you know, they haven't been able to open that up yet. There's zero indication that they have. So that's going to be a problem. So, I mean, Russia is going to increasingly have not just air dominance, but air superiority over more and more of Ukraine. And the time is not far distant when Russian aerospace forces will be dropping FAB glide bombs on Kiev on a regular basis. And, of course, that is the big threat, right? All of this noise about air and missile defense interceptors is not really about bringing down Russia's—or Iran's, it must be said—ballistic missiles or hypersonic missiles, because the Patriot has very limited to no capability to actually do so.

And that has actually been reported in the Western mainstream media at various times before and then dropped down the 15-minute memory hole because it doesn't fit the narratives. The real danger is that Russia will then be able to safely operate its air force, which it has husbanded very cautiously over the course of this war on the assumption that, at the end of it, they might or will need to fight NATO directly. And as a result of that, Russia's air force is actually considerably bigger now than it was back in 2022. But they will be able to use their Su-34 fighter-bombers to drop FABs, which are really among the true wonder weapons of this war.

Russia's dropping somewhere around 400 of them a day on the Kiev regime's strongpoints and forces, but increasingly they're using them against cities. We've seen FAB strikes in Odessa, in Dnipropetrovsk, in Zaporozhye, and we're going to see them on a regular basis in Kiev in the near future. The whole purpose of having Patriots is not so much defense against missiles, whatever they might claim publicly. They can possibly hit slow-moving cruise missiles, right? But they can hit aircraft. It's a lot easier to hit an aircraft than it is to hit a missile.

So the threat, first of S-300s, you know, Soviet legacy systems in the first stages of the conflict, and then of Patriots, kept Russia's air force at bay. So they still have to get within 50 kilometers or so to be able to drop those FAB glide bombs. But now, with Kiev facing a complete dearth of any air defense, much less any kind of coordinated, integrated, interconnected air and missile defense network, the Russian air force is going to be freer. Kiev is going to be in a very bad place this winter on multiple fronts, not just from the jet-powered drones and the ballistic missiles and the hypersonic missiles, but the FABs are going to start dropping as well.

Kiev is going to be evacuated, you know, if not officially, then by its population and likely by most of the Kiev regime itself. The Rada has already been discussing moving further west, you know, presumably to Lvov or even to Europe. And ultimately, there is going to be no electricity, no running water, and no sanitation for days and potentially weeks at a time throughout the winter months ahead. That is going to make life for ordinary civilians in Kiev impossible, forcing them to relocate further west into West Ukraine or Europe. But it is also going to make the very functioning of government at the most basic human level impossible. So that is the real threat.

That's why they're so consumed with air defense. But I'd say the real damage being done to the Kiev regime right now is in terms of economics and logistics. And that is Russia's blockade of Ukraine by sea, using long-range strikes with missiles, drones, and hybrid missile-drones, with the Dan-T and the Banderol now being used extensively. And Russia has, in the past four weeks, started attacking any third-party-flagged ship carrying NATO military supplies that tries to run the gauntlet into Odessa and the other Black Sea and Danube River ports. And that has led to headlines in The Wall Street Journal and elsewhere saying that the Black Sea is now the most dangerous maritime shipping route in the world.

And they're not only hitting them on the approach to Odessa now, they're actively hunting them down in waters right off the coasts of Bulgaria and Romania, in their exclusive economic zones. And we've seen video of them using USVs, using surface drones to do so as well. So Russia has not just aerial assets, but unmanned naval assets that are now being used for this as well. And the NATO countries have, for a couple of years now, been playing this game of detaining Russian shadow fleet ships here and there. Well, Russia is now responding to that in a major way. And they are, you know, just completely massacring NATO's own shadow fleet of ships as it desperately attempts to continue to funnel military supplies into the Kiev regime in Ukraine.

Because it's so much more logistically difficult to do that by land, right? The land options, you know, through the Polish border, trains and whatnot, are already operating at maximum capacity. Although that's being interrupted too, because Russia is hitting border checkpoints. They're hitting train stations, and they're hunting locomotives all over Ukraine, including in western Ukraine now. So this logistical strangulation is continuing. But they have to keep trying to run this gauntlet in the Black Sea to the Black Sea ports to bring military supplies in, because without it, they just can't sustain the Kiev regime's military ability to continue to resist on the battlefield in the medium term. They have to.

That's why, no matter how many times they're hit and ships are sunk, they keep trying to do it, because they have no other options. It's a lot like continuing to attack Iran because they can't accept losing. They can't accept losing to Russia in Ukraine either, just in geopolitical terms. They believe that it is existential for them as well. Not, of course, for the U.S. or the physical existence of France or the U.K. That's just nonsense. But for U.S.-led Western global hegemony. And they can't, you know, in terms of their ideological identity and geopolitically, they can't give that up. They're going to fight for that to the end. That's why you increasingly hear just absolutely batshit insane cries from the top military and political leadership in the U.K. that we're going to war with Russia, that you're all going to be conscripted, that civilians are going to have to make sacrifices.

And then even crazier stuff, like preparing for a Russian invasion of UK soil or German soil. Of course, there's no reality to that whatsoever, right? But all of it is to help psychologically prepare their civilian populations for the inevitability of needing to send NATO—maybe not NATO troops, but NATO member state troops. You know, it'll be a coalition of the willing to send troops, not because they believe NATO can win in military terms. Maybe some of them still do have delusions, but that's just because they're ignorant and drink their own Kool-Aid propaganda on a regular basis.

But there's no way that any European militaries have the ability to stand against Russia conventionally in Ukraine. They would simply be human tripwire forces. And ultimately, the belief is that Russia will just back down if we put troops on the ground in Ukraine because they won't risk going to war with NATO. Any madman who believes that, you know, is putting us all in an extremely dangerous situation going forward, because Russia will not hesitate to strike any NATO members. They have said that repeatedly. They've said it means war with Russia. They're not going to back down for them.

Ukraine is a much more immediate existential threat to Russia than losing the conflict in Ukraine is to some abstract notion of U.S.-led Western global hegemony. They're not going to back down. And on the other end of that, there must certainly be some type of belief that if Russia does kill our people in Ukraine, if we send them in there, well, then the U.S. will come to our rescue. And, well, they've got two more years of Trump in there, and that is not guaranteed with Trump. The Trump administration itself—this whole diesel deal—this is all domestic smoke and mirrors. Russia instituted a ban on the export of diesel. Russia is the number two exporter of diesel to the world.

That's what the majority of their, you know, quite large refining capacity is dedicated to. But with the attacks on their refineries—and when we talk about these attacks, we should call them CIA attacks because that's what they are. And we know that because the CIA told us so, right? On the front pages of The New York Times, The Washington Post, and most recently The Atlantic, the CIA is bragging that this is their war against Russia, that they're directing it. You know, this is how Trump, I guess, bought the CIA off or whatever. But, you know, "I'm not fighting the war in Ukraine because it's the CIA doing it." And that's all happening under the covers.

So whatever. But Trump, again, for domestic political smoke and mirrors, is claiming that, "Oh, I've made a deal with Russia on diesel, and the regime had better not attack my refineries." All of those continuing attacks on Russian refineries can't happen without CIA intelligence sharing, targeting, and active satellite assistance, which means either Trump is lying, which is entirely possible, or Trump doesn't have control of his own CIA, of his own deep state, and he has no ability to restrict them—or a very limited ability to restrict them, anyway. Maybe that's why he was working with Elon Musk to throttle Starlink, because he couldn't get the CIA to do anything real. So, from the Russian perspective, it doesn't matter so much whether Trump is simply unable to command the U.S. security state and is just a figurehead, or whether he's lying.

Because for Russia, the results of that are still the same. Maybe they know. Maybe they have better intelligence. But for our purposes, it also doesn't matter from an analytical perspective. The war against Russia continues. The war against Russia has been escalating. Just one night this week, a couple of nights ago, Russia warded off a 1,214-strong long-range drone strike. At least 600 of those drones were launched at Moscow, to absolutely zero effect because of Russia's veritable air defense and electronic warfare force field. I mean, literally 1,200 drones, and nothing substantial was done with that. So that's the CIA continuing it. And just on Friday, they managed to sneak one through—certainly not, you know, in Moscow, but at a refinery in Samara again.

So either, you know, Trump is lying again, or he's not able to control his CIA even before the election is over. And of course, certainly there are no constraints after this. We know that John Ratcliffe came to Moscow just over a month ago now with threats, with warnings: "You need to stop. You need to agree to a ceasefire on our terms, or we will escalate against you." And of course, a big part of that escalation is going to involve long-range strikes, but also, increasingly, dirty war. There were warnings of a terror threat in Moscow just this evening as well. And they had to evacuate the historical park, reserve, and museum area, which also happens to be where I was married—literally, in the church on that historical museum reserve.

So I take that one personally. But this is not going to end, even with things getting increasingly bad, bad, bad for the Kiev regime on so many levels. Logistically and economically, I think, are the most important right now, but on the battlefield as well, and with the literal physical destruction of Kiev and other big cities. There's one city in Sumy region, Konotop. Russia, you know, has hit the electrical infrastructure there almost in passing because they're doing it, you know, across the board at this point, well into western Ukraine and beyond. But the authorities have announced that

Konotop is now without electricity until at least spring. Tomorrow is the 1st of November. They're going to have no electricity, no heat, no water, no sanitation until spring, you know, other than what can be provided by small diesel generators and the like.

That is, you know, heating points and so forth. Life is impossible. Konotop is going to be evacuated by its civilian population. That's what more and more of Ukraine is going to be facing. It's grim. It's dark. It's cold. Terrible stuff. But, you know, as the U.S., the CIA, and the Europeans keep escalating and escalating against Russia, often to limited effect, it must be said, in the grander scheme of things—you know, stings, poking a bear—that's continually what it is. Well, the bear's up now. The rules of engagement have really changed this time. And Ukrainian cities are going to be made unlivable, right? You're not going to see Russia carpet-bombing civilians, but they're going to make life simply unsustainable for all military logistics, for the functioning of government, but also for the civilian population as well.

And if the civilians all flee to western Ukraine or to Europe, of course, that's much better for Russia because then they need to worry much less about collateral damage and can really, you know, dismantle what is left of this regime to an ever greater degree. But again, expect things to get dirtier while all of that happens. The escalation is not going to decrease. It's just going to get nastier and dirtier. You know, David Ignatius told us in The Washington Post already a year ago that the dirty war is just getting started. Well, you know, two can play that game. You know, how many industrial accidents are we seeing at military production facilities across Europe and the UK and even in the US? Now Russia is sinking NATO's shadow fleet, you know, quite openly and quite systematically at this point. So things aren't going to get any better. Things are only going to get darker, but it's getting darker as the Kiev regime is crumbling.

#Danny

Well, Mark, I think that's a fitting way to end a show on Halloween. I want to make sure everybody knows that the link to your Boosty account is in the video description below so they can go there.

#Mark Sleboda

It's also right on the screen.

#Danny

Oh, right, right, right. Yeah, I can expand that.

#Mark Sleboda

You've done that enough times. Thank you. Yeah.

#Danny

There it is. So in the video description below, you can find that link where you can just click and support Mark. Also in the video description are the ways to support this channel. And you can hit that like button for free so the show continues onward after we are done here and more people get to see it. It helps boost it in the algorithm. Tomorrow, November 1st, at 12 noon Eastern time, I will be with Professor Saeed Mohammad Marandi. So do check us out at 12 noon. The clocks are changing, everyone who's in the United States. Be sure you're aware of that because it will sneak up on you. So we are now entering the winter, and people are wondering where my costume is, Mark. Last year I was Sergey Lavrov at Anchorage. I still have the sweater, but I don't have a vest anymore—the vest he wore at Anchorage in Alaska. So I didn't get to wear it today because the shirt by itself doesn't make sense.

#Mark Sleboda

That was great on your part, but even greater on Lavrov's part for trolling the entirety of the West.

#Danny

It was amazing. Yep. Always, always vindicated too, because ever since then, we've seen who's coming out looking like they're in control of what they're doing versus the other side, the United States side. Anyway, slow, patient, but, yeah, inevitable, inexorable. Right. Everybody, hit the like button before you go. Boost this show in the algorithm. We're heading out of here. See you tomorrow, 12 noon.

#Mark Sleboda

Trick or treat, comrades.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. Don't eat too much candy if you're into that. Nah, eat it all. Eat it all. Have your fun.

#Mark Sleboda

Wash it down with some alcohol.

#Danny

Yeah, there you go. All right, everybody. Thanks for all the super chats, too. Thanks for all the new members. Thank you so much. I'm pulling them up on the screen quickly. I appreciate you guys. See you tomorrow, 12 noon Eastern time. Bye-bye.