

Col. Larry Wilkerson: 8 PM Ultimatum: The Clock is Ticking on War

The interview discusses how recent battlefield realities have pushed the U.S. toward ceasefire talks with Iran, highlighting failed operations, internal Pentagon tensions, and limited military effectiveness. It argues Iran has strategically outmaneuvered its opponents, leveraging control over key energy routes and exposing weaknesses in Western capabilities. The conversation also questions leadership decisions, resource shortages, and the sustainability of further escalation. Broader themes include shifting global power dynamics, economic consequences, and growing political divisions in the U.S., suggesting the conflict may reshape both regional stability and the future of American influence.

#Nima

The ultimatum from Donald Trump — the deadline is 8 p.m. Eastern time today. He said in his post that a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again. “I don’t want that to happen,” he said, “but it probably will.” And Larry, here’s the latest call Fox News had with Donald Trump. They spoke with him just moments ago, and here’s what they reported.

#Guest

I got off the phone with the president. He called, and I said, “Listen, if you were to put odds on it, what are the chances this ends up being a negotiated deal?” He said he wasn’t going to put odds on it, but 8 p.m. is happening — that’s what he said. He said if we get to that point, there’s going to be an attack like they haven’t seen. He’s sticking to that right now. He said if negotiations move forward today and there’s something concrete, that could change. But at this hour, he didn’t want to put odds on it; he said they’re moving forward with the plans they have. That’s a huge deal. Obviously, we all think it’s something he’s putting out there to say, “Don’t do this.” He says he doesn’t want to do it, but at this hour he’s sticking to it and saying it might be likely if they don’t come to the table.

#Nima

You know what’s so strange, Larry, about this whole negotiation they’re talking about? There are no negotiations on the part of the Iranians. There’s no talk.

#Larry

Bingo. Bingo. You’re listening to a man who is growing — and not just Donald Trump; that Fox newscaster too — growing increasingly frustrated, increasingly exasperated that everything hasn’t

gone the way he thought it would. And I suspect the way Hegseth told him it would go. Maybe not General Keane, but Hegseth was probably just as sycophantic, telling him everything would be copacetic, everything would be terrific, it'd be over quickly — as anybody else in the administration, and even Trump himself, because they're cut from the same cloth, Petey and Donald. What you're looking at is a president who doesn't know how to get out of this. He has no idea how to get out of it.

He's just been handed a colossal tactical defeat in the desert. I think Larry Johnson and others have parsed it quite well. I've heard some of the same things, but I think we lost quite a few aircraft, and I think we lost some troops. And he's not being honest about that. He's not telling the American people. He's not telling Congress that this has happened. He took a defeat — an in-your-face defeat. It was all designed as a special mission related to the nuclear reactor. And Archigas, in his remarks in Istanbul — boy, did he look tired. I don't think I've ever seen him look so tired. And I've been following him pretty closely for the last six months or so. He just looked tired.

And he wasn't stumbling over his words, but he was slurring them just a little and searching for the right English word. I've never seen him do that. He's usually very, very polished. He's obviously tired—extremely tired. I don't blame him. But he was saying they didn't attack a nuclear reactor. They attacked the United Nations. They attacked the International Atomic Energy Agency. They attacked the Nonproliferation Treaty. They attacked international law. They attacked a country abiding by all its commitments in terms of nuclear power. That's what they attacked. You people need to understand this is a rogue nation. It's tearing up everything we've created in the world that we call international law, right before your eyes.

And he didn't say this—he probably would later. He was taking questions. And now we're getting ready, after having announced it—according to Donald Trump, anyway—to perpetrate another genocide. And note that I say another genocide, because without the United States of America, the genocide in Gaza could not have been carried out, not the way it was. So we're getting ready to perpetrate a second genocide on a second president's watch. And this one has just announced it to all and sundry, from one end of the world to the other. This is something I never thought I would see in my life. This is Hitler come back as an American.

#Nima

Larry, you mentioned the operation. Yesterday, Donald Trump tried to make his case about how successful this operation was. But you said you believe it was some sort of raid in Iran.

#Larry

It was, and it featured multiple C-130 aircraft—both refuelers and transports. It featured Black Hawks. It featured, as we saw, overhead air cover—F-15s in this case. It featured Little Birds, probably OH-6s, you know, like I flew in Vietnam, for example—much modernized and really high-

tech now. But it featured everything you might expect Delta or SEAL Team 6, or those two together, to use. And it failed. It didn't work. All I could think about—I was listening to Larry talk about it, but I'd heard it from another gentleman—all I could think about was the desert. Remember the desert under Jimmy Carter, when we had the big helicopter? The bus.

#Nima

The buses.

#Larry

Yeah, it was called Eagle Claw, I think—Operation Eagle Claw. Yeah, and it was a disaster. But we admitted it. We had a president in the White House who wasn't going to lie about it. We admitted it, and we canceled the operation. We didn't go ahead with it. Major Meadows got stuck in Iran—I knew Major Meadows. He had to E&E his way out of Iran because he was the one who was going to meet them at the place where they were keeping most of the hostages, introduce them to the location, guide them in, and everything. So this is a disaster they're hiding. They're hiding it. I haven't heard any real debrief or testimony or anything about what really happened. I suspect a few people died too.

#Nima

We had—I don't know if you saw—we had a lady, the documents of a lady, in that scene. They were just opening up the documents. Let me bring up the video here, because it shows the documents they were...

#Nima

Here's the moment they find the document. You can see the lady, Amanda M. Ryder. Nobody's talking about her anymore—nobody even mentions her name in the United States.

#Larry

I can't imagine they'd bring someone like that. Looked like a civilian to me—didn't look like a military person. So unless she's a nuclear expert or something like that, they must've felt her expertise was necessary.

#Nima

She was on a B-2 visa, you know, the visa for tourists—people who go to visit Israel. And she was part of this operation.

#Larry

Yeah, anytime you see anything happening in Iran—on the ground in particular, but a lot of times in the air too—count on Israel being there. Count on Israel being an integral part of the operation in one way or another, either providing intelligence or actually helping with kinetic action. They're going to be there. And by the way, I'm sure you're going to ask me about this, but it's looking worse than 2006 right now in Lebanon. They're getting their butts handed to them. So you've got Iran—ooh, Trump better live up to his promise—Israel being pounded ceaselessly with missiles from Iran. Tel Aviv was described to me today by a longtime citizen of that city as burning. And you've got Lebanon, and you've got Gaza unfinished. Israel is not looking too good.

#Nima

Larry, when you look at the situation right now—Donald Trump talking about putting an end, you know, saying a whole civilization will die tonight—what comes to your mind? Is he talking about nuclear weapons? Because we had the same sort of rhetoric with J.D. Vance. He's in Hungary; he said he was there. I don't know if he's going to help Orbán in Hungary, because right now nobody likes Donald Trump.

#Larry

Nobody likes him either.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. And how is that going to be helpful for Orbán? But putting that aside, when he says we have tools that haven't been used so far, I think the only tool he's talking about is something as big as a nuclear bomb. What's your understanding of that?

#Larry

Well, I listened to John this morning—John Mearsheimer. I think he was on The Judge's Show. I know John pretty well. He originally used the image of the escalation ladder some months ago—maybe weeks, but probably months now—and he talked about us being on the bottom rung, or the next rung, or whatever. At that time, John wasn't willing to go the full route, if you will, to the use of nuclear weapons. He was a little more cagey this time, but he was also, like me, really worried, I think. And when it came to describing what Trump was doing, I don't think I've ever heard such forceful language from Professor Mearsheimer about what Trump had said in his announcement. He announced that he was going to commit a genocide. It's that clear. It's that plain. He says he's going to eradicate a people.

Well, it's not too far from that statement if you think he's serious—about the use of nuclear weapons—because he isn't going to eradicate them with conventional means. There's just no way. He could stay at it for ten years and he wouldn't eradicate them. He might bring them to their knees and get them finally to say, "You know, I quit." I don't even think he's going to do that, even if he stays at it forever. And he's going to run out of a lot of what he needs to do it with. But with nuclear weapons, it would be an entirely new dimension, and it brings Russia and China and several other powers—Pakistan comes to mind immediately—into the fray. I listened to Sergey Lavrov talking. They asked him a question. He's in Istanbul, I believe. "Istanbul" was up on the board behind him.

They asked him a question from the audience: did he believe the Bahrain proposal for control of the Strait of Hormuz was a good one? He didn't even bat an eye—"No, it's not." So that tells me they know exactly what Iran is thinking, and Iran knows exactly what they're thinking. So we're looking at the potential—were Trump to use nuclear weapons in a massive way against Iran? I do not think the rest of the world would take it lying down. I think we'd probably be off to the races, with competitors—principally Russia and China—going to their arsenals, checking things out, getting ready. Because this is simply a step too far. It's not something anyone should be talking about, even in threats like Donald Trump is. But that's what people are now talking about—serious people—talking about what he might have meant by that comment.

That's not good. That's not good at all. And I think we've seen that what we have for our president right now borders on maniacal—borders on megalomania. We know about the narcissism. We know about all the things psychiatrists and psychologists have said about Donald Trump. But I think what we're seeing now is true megalomania. I think he's lost his rocker, as we used to say—he's off his rocker. And there's no one around him to rein him in. J.D. Vance isn't going to do it. J.D. Vance doesn't have the courage to do it. No one else is going to do it. Thune's not going to do it. Johnson's not going to do it. Johnson's too busy wishing for Armageddon to come about. You can't make this stuff up.

These people are serious about Jesus and about this war being for Jesus—people like Johnson, people like Ted Cruz. And Trump doesn't give a hang about Jesus. I doubt he could spell his name. But he uses it, and he's got it now to the point where he's gathered all these different allies behind him—crude, indifferent, stupid, crass cretins, religious zealots—and he's latched, by an umbilical cord, to the next person in the world most like him: Bibi Netanyahu. Not in terms of dumbness, because Bibi's pretty smart, but in terms of just being a cretin and bordering on megalomania, getting more and more like that because he's so desperate about his own personal situation. And he's desperate now because Israel is Nima—Israel is being destroyed.

It's being destroyed on several fronts. That's got to be plaguing Trump somewhat too, because I imagine some of those big billionaire Jewish Americans and others who are ultra-Zionists are pressuring him about what he should do and keep doing to Iran. They're behind him, pushing him hard, because this is what Netanyahu wants. He wants Iran in absolute chaos—disorganized, in

chaos. All of its ballistic missiles searched out and destroyed, all of its uranium searched out and destroyed. That's what Israel wants. At the same time, it wants Lebanon destroyed. It wants Gaza. It wants the West Bank. It wants all of Jerusalem. This is quite a combination of thieves and murderers.

#Nima

I think the language Donald Trump is using is similar to what Benjamin Netanyahu was using before him.

#Larry

It's like an echo chamber.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. But the difference is, Larry, when you represent a country like the United States, it's a huge responsibility as the president. It's not just Israel. You know, Netanyahu can say whatever he wants. But as the president of the United States, it's important how you express yourself—your words, your feelings. And that's hugely problematic, because they see the United States; they don't see Donald Trump himself. Right now, Donald Trump is the face of the United States, the head of state. He has the power to use nuclear weapons. That's why it's so important. No one else has that kind of power. This is the problem—the main concern for people who are listening to Donald Trump talk this way.

#Larry

Let me say two things. One, don't make too light of Bibi Netanyahu. He's as dangerous as Donald Trump is, in his own way. He's apt to use a nuclear weapon or two also. Wouldn't that be fun—Israel tossing a few out there and the United States tossing a few more? So I don't discount Netanyahu in terms of the region or in terms of his ability to impact global relations and global security. When you put them together, you really have a combination that feeds off itself—back and forth, back and forth. And they feed off their desperation too. Both men are very desperate right now. And it shocks me when I think to myself, would my military allow this president to hurl nuclear weapons at another state? And my mind can't say positively no. That is a very disquieting thought.

I never thought I would think that. I never thought a president would use a nuclear weapon under any circumstance other than being attacked first with nuclear weapons. That's how I thought about it through the entire Cold War. We will not initiate nuclear weapons use—despite what we did against Japan. We will not initiate; we will only respond. And that's our deterrence. That's why we need to have a lot of weapons, because they're going to get destroyed in that initial strike, and we have to have enough to respond. That provides deterrence. Now I'm looking, as you just suggested,

not only at Bibi Netanyahu, a major non-NATO ally in Southwest Asia, possibly using a nuclear weapon, but at us joining in.

And if my military doesn't stand up to this president and say no, and walk out, and refuse to execute—well, I'm not confident of that anymore. I wouldn't have thought that as many who've executed what we've done so far would have done it. I wouldn't have thought those ships would have fired those Tomahawks at that school. And the excuse that they didn't know has been blown away for me, because I've seen the onboard camera video of those Tomahawks approaching that school—what is clearly a school. And besides, they've attacked many other targets that are just as much a war crime as that school. I would never have thought my military would participate in that to the degree they have up to this point. So, what am I to conclude about their willingness to participate in Donald Trump's destroying another civilization?