

Iran & China Just HIT US Naval Blockade So Hard, Trump in PANIC | Larry Johnson

Former CIA analyst Larry Johnson joins to provide a full update on the Iran war and the massive escalations building in response to Trump's blockade. Larry Johnson's blog: <https://sonar21.com/PATREON.COM/DANNYHAIPHONG> Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #trump #iran #china #usnavy

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. I'm in Hangzhou, China, and I'm still doing daily updates—this time with a returning friend of the show and regular guest, Larry Johnson. Thanks, Larry, for coming on the show.

#Larry Johnson

Hey, thanks for having me. Sorry, my dog's barking at the delivery guy.

#Danny

That's all right. Everybody, hit the like button as you come on—that helps boost the stream. I want to get started with you, Larry. You know, we're in day four of this blockade announced by the Trump administration via the U.S. Navy. The latest news is that during this time, Iran has basically hit back really hard by not capitulating to the blockade. It's shipped 9 million barrels of crude, according to Drop Site News, in the Gulf of Oman since the blockade took effect. And not only that, but more than 20 commercial ships have passed through the Strait of Hormuz in just the last day.

More than 800 ships remain stopped in the Persian Gulf as part of Iran's own control of the Strait of Hormuz. And China has essentially called Trump's bluff. Trump has said that this is all about China—that the Trump administration is trying to stop oil from reaching China from Iran through the Strait of Hormuz. And China has said they're just going to keep on going, that they'll keep meeting their arrangements. So where are we, Larry, in all this? It seems like Donald Trump is panicking a bit—working really hard to, on the one hand, surge troops to the region, and on the other hand, talking a lot about settling. So what's going on here?

#Larry Johnson

Well, there's no strategy, so they keep changing. They're basically trying to get Iran to obey, and Iran refuses to obey. That's been their military objective now—get Iran to do what we tell them to do. Well, that's not happening. This is, if you will, Iran as the adult now. They're no longer a child, no longer dependent on you in any way whatsoever. They've realized, you know what, I'm on my own, I'm making my own money, and I'm going to live my life as I see fit—to put it in human terms. Any son who's ever been in confrontation with their father knows that moment when the father says, "Do it my way or get out of the house." Okay.

The guys get out of the house and go on to have their own lives. So what's happening here is a failure to appreciate that the world hasn't yet felt the pain of losing 20% of its oil supply. And what I mean by that is, let's go back to February 28th—on that date, when the war started, there were ships loaded with oil that began sailing out of the Persian Gulf and through the Strait of Hormuz. Those ships are just now arriving at their destination ports around the world, because oil tankers don't move very fast—about 200 miles a day. And if you're sailing 5,000 miles, just do the math: it's going to take you five days to go 1,000 miles, maybe 25 or 30 days to go 5,000 miles.

#Larry Johnson

So the war hasn't really begun yet. They're only now starting to actually experience what a 20% decline in oil supply means. In many countries, that means shortages—literally running out of supply. And they can't just turn around and say, "Oh, well, we'll just get it from somewhere else." There is no other place to get it. Or if there is, the price is going to go up because you've got reduced supply and lots of demand. So, you know, it's like—if you're the only girl on a desert island with five guys, or ten, or twenty—you pretty much get to be in charge and decide what you want in terms of having a partner. That same effect is now showing up in the oil market.

And so that's now going to have an increasingly depressing effect on the global economy across the board, because the price people pay for fuel is going to keep going up. I saw a report yesterday on OilPrice.com that said a ship arriving in Singapore had oil coming off at \$210 a barrel. Unbelievable. But they need it. So we see these guys in the oil futures market saying, "Oh yeah, \$90, \$95." They're kidding themselves. Because even if the war stopped today—if the United States, Iran, and Israel all said, "Hey, okay, we're sorry, let's all kiss and make up"—it would still take three months before supplies got back to where they were on February 27th.

That's number one. Number two, this blockade that the United States has put up—it's a facade. It's a joke. It's not real. It's being presented that way to the American people. They're being gaslit about it, told, "Oh yeah, we're doing this, we're turning these ships away, we're going to crush the Iranian economy." Let's look at a real case study of a blockade against a country where the United States actually controlled what could get in and out—that would be Cuba. Now, Cuba doesn't have the advantages that Iran does. Cuba is an island; it doesn't have friendly neighboring countries where it can get goods smuggled in or shipped out.

They're on the Caspian Sea. They can actually ship oil up into Russia. They can work out a swap with Russia—Russia sends out its oil, and then Iran supplies what Russia sent out for it. You know, we've been at that blockade business with Cuba now for 66 years, and it hasn't worked out real well. I mean, the Cubans have suffered—they've suffered economically, no doubt about it. But again, they didn't have the kind of alternatives that Iran has. So this is just one more act of desperation by the Trump administration, which thought they could start a war. Trump decided he could start a war, it'd be over in three days because the Israelis told him so. Turns out, the Israelis lied.

#Danny

Yeah, those are all great points. And to the point about the blockade on Cuba, it's much tighter now, even under the Trump administration. We saw just recently a Russian tanker pass through that blockade, dock, and transfer much-needed energy resources—oil—to Cuba. Cuba's signaling that there are limits to these blockades, Larry. And it seems like one of the big ones is, especially when it comes to China—the target, it seems, of Scott Besson's fantasies with the Iran blockade—this notion that no matter how much the United States says it wants to contain and target countries like Russia and China, when it comes to actually confronting them, it's much easier said than done.

And I think that's what we're really seeing in this blockade, which is why China is not only continuing to do what it's doing, but also being very vocal—not only in its condemnation, but about the dangers of continuing on this path. Iran has just said—and I think this is big—that if this continues, it's not clear how long Iran will tolerate it. They said the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf—all ships there, U.S. ships, U.S.-related ships—they're all up for targeting if this goes on.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, well, number one, look at the inconsistency in the U.S. stance. When the Iranians first tightened their chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, Trump's initial reaction was, "OK, well, we don't care because we don't get anything out of there. Let the Europeans worry about it." Then all of a sudden, getting it open was urgent. A week ago Sunday—on Easter, the Western Easter—Trump had that profane outburst. You know, he dropped the F-bomb and was calling them crazy assholes. So he seemed really keen on getting it open, like, "We've got to have the Strait open." And then this week, somehow, we've got to have the Strait open so badly that we're going to blockade it—so it's closed.

And you're going, huh? Let's follow that logic. This is a unique logic Americans have applied in conflicts historically. In Vietnam, we had to destroy the village in order to save it. And now we've got to blockade the Strait in order to open it. Oh my God, this is Monty Python Black Knight territory. You know, the Black Knight was the one who kept fighting and kept losing his limbs—one arm gone, then the next, then a leg gets chopped off, then both legs. So he's lying there on the ground, basically like third base on a baseball diamond, and still threatening to fight, completely incapable of fighting.

And so here's the United States making threats, but it can't deliver on them because these ships are parked so far offshore that it's very difficult to locate, identify, and track vessels. It's difficult unless you've tagged a vessel with some sort of electronic transponder, or if they have, you know, the equivalent of what the airlines have—identify friend or foe, emits a signal. You can't just tell who owns the ship and what it's doing unless you can visibly see the flag. And we forget how much territory this part of the Arabian Sea leading into the Indian Ocean covers. It's big. It's not small. It's big.

And we don't have enough ships to actually cover the area. I use the analogy of a pizza. So, take a pizza—you've got that circle. Put your finger in the middle. Okay, that's the point. Let's say that's the point of the Strait of Hormuz. Then, as you move out toward the crust, well, when you get to the crust, it's pretty wide. It's not safe. And that area increases as you move farther away. The ships have to move farther out because if they're close in, Iran has what are called coastal defense cruise missiles. They also have short-range ballistic missiles that can hit those ships.

They've got underwater drones, surface-level drones that run on top of the water, and drones in the air. So they have several threat vectors that can be launched from, you know, maybe 50 miles inside Iranian territory or even farther. Those ships have to back out, because if they get in close, they're going to be sunk. And that was inherent in the threat they made. Notice what the United States is doing in the real world: they deployed the George H.W. Bush. It's heading there to battle. We're the mighty U.S. Navy—we're at sea.

So it sailed across the Atlantic and got to the Strait of Gibraltar, and had to make a choice: do we go into the Mediterranean Sea, then down the Suez Canal into the Red Sea and continue through the Strait of Bab al-Mandab? Or do we sail around Africa so we don't run the risk of getting sunk in the Red Sea? Well, they opted for B, not A, which tells you everything you need to know. The United States—at least the people doing the planning for that voyage—at least they're not insane, because they knew that if they got into the Red Sea in this situation, the odds that that aircraft carrier would have gotten out were slim.

#Danny

Yeah. And, you know, Larry, I know you recently published an article—"Watch What Trump Does, Ignore What He Says: More War on the Agenda." It seems like a lot of these moves, you said there's no strategy, also seem born out of a sense of panic because of the limited options and bad choices for the U.S. empire. But maybe talk about "more war on the agenda," because there are troops—thousands, I mean 10,000 more—heading to the region. And some, I think you were just on Daniel Davis's show, have pointed out that they've been told the United States is still very much gearing up for a kinetic war, even ground operations. So your thoughts on this, and how it connects to this blockade—because this blockade is what everyone is seeing right now, and there might be other things underneath it.

#Larry Johnson

So we've heard Trump—he's been all over the place. They said, "Oh, the war is over," or "It's almost over."

#Danny

But there's going to be another uptick, and then it's going to be over.

#Larry Johnson

And you're going, okay, which is it? So I say, look, what is he actually doing? Is he stopping the deployment of troops? Is he calling troops home? Or is he sending more troops? He's sending more troops. Are there empty flights headed over and then bringing people and things back? Or are those flights increasing, arriving, and unloading more materiel and more personnel? It's the latter. So that tells me we're gearing up to continue fighting. Even though we've had this— as of Monday, that'll be a two-week pause. I can't believe how fast time is flying by here. But, you know, this ceasefire between Israel, the United States, and Iran went into effect Tuesday night, a week ago Tuesday.

That was in response to negotiations that Trump had put J.D. Vance in charge of. Vance had agreed, but he shared it with Trump, and Trump signed off on the Iranian demand. They said, "Look, okay, we'll agree to a ceasefire agreement and then negotiations—but those negotiations start from the premise that you're going to withdraw your troops, that you'll get a ceasefire not just with us but also with Hezbollah and Israel, that the shooting and killing stop, that our assets are unfrozen, that you ease all sanctions, etc." So that was in place until Israel sabotaged it and refused to have a truce with Hezbollah.

Now, right there—what's going on between Israel and Hezbollah—that's the critical battle right now. Israel's trying to take this one town in southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah won't give it up. They keep fighting, they keep inflicting casualties on the Israelis, and so far Israel's shown no sign of giving up. But I think if Israel continues to suffer losses like it has been, they'll agree to a ceasefire with Hezbollah within a couple of weeks. When that happens, we'll actually be in a position to potentially move forward toward a negotiated settlement. It's not one that's going to make the neocons happy, and it's not one that would make the Zionists happy, but there is a way for Trump to get out of this. The essence of that deal is what I call a resurrected JCPOA, modified in that the previous JCPOA had a time limit of, say, ten years.

This one would have no time limit. It would be seen as a permanent agreement—one where Iran would agree, permanently, never to build a nuclear weapon and, on top of that, to limit the enrichment of uranium. Trump could get that and then sell it as, "See, our war has been worth it. We've spent all this money, but we've secured nuclear peace in the Middle East." Now, what you'd have to cover up—or, you know, swallow—is the fact that the U.S. presence in the Persian Gulf has

been basically erased, and the U.S. stature there, among the Arab Gulf states, has been severely tarnished. We'd vowed to protect them, and it turns out we can't protect them.

We're incapable of protecting them, and our weakness has been exposed. So before we get to that point, I think Trump is—well, you know, when this ceasefire ends, I believe it's on Monday, the end of the two-week period, or maybe noon Tuesday. Then I think the United States is—well, I know Danny Haiphong has heard from four different sources, and they weren't all talking to the same person and repeating it—that the plans are in place to launch major attacks on all of the nuclear sites and power plants in Iran, not understanding that the power plants are quite decentralized. And then Trump would be in a position to declare, "I've now decimated Iran." Sounds familiar.

#Danny

Yeah. Déjà vu—seven months, eight months ago?

#Larry Johnson

Déjà vu all over again, as Yogi Berra used to say. But then we got word yesterday, from a reliable source, that that plan is now off the table. Instead, they're looking at another special ops mission to go after and obtain the highly enriched uranium. That could end up in a disaster. And as that planning moves forward on one track, you still have J.D. Vance working behind the scenes, trying to revive—go back to the talks—even though he's the one who walked out on them. But he walked out on orders, basically, from Trump, Susie Wiles, and Bibi Netanyahu. So we've seen a lot of movement by the Russians and Chinese trying to help broker talks.

The chief of staff of the Pakistani army showed up in Tehran yesterday. I guess he's old friends with Abbas Harachi, the foreign minister. Yeah, and you saw them—they had a good man hug there on the tarmac. You could tell these guys are bros, not foes. So if there's a new round of talks, it's likely to take place in, say, Russia, maybe China. China's less likely, though, just because it's so far away and difficult to get there. I think Iran would be more comfortable flying in and out of Moscow. It would be harder to try to assassinate them on a return visit, especially if the Russians are flying them on a Russian-flagged airliner. Okay.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, I mean... yeah, this déjà vu is absolutely incredible, Larry. And talking about the ceasefire now—you mentioned Hezbollah—I don't know if you saw Trump's Truth Social post. This literally came right before the program. He announced that Lebanon and Israel are going to engage in a 10-day ceasefire brokered by him, or by the Trump administration, with him taking the credit. I'm curious, Larry, how you see this development. If true—and I believe it's mostly confirmed—it really is just a Truth Social post, though. If true, and given that there's been a lot of consternation and criticism about the nature of these talks, with the Lebanese government dealing directly with

Israel and not necessarily involving Hezbollah, it's hard to know what's going on. But if it's true, is this Trump now caving to this key demand, finally, after nearly the entire length of this ceasefire? What do you make of it?

#Larry Johnson

No, I wish it was. I think it's just the opposite. To get a deal between Lebanon—or the government of Lebanon—and Israel is to convince the Lebanese government to start attacking Hezbollah. You know, I think the vast, vast majority of Americans really don't understand, or they don't recall, the history of this entire sordid affair and the role the United States has played in Lebanon going back 51 years. And that, you know, we've really helped exacerbate the situation. Because, you know, previously Lebanon had four main groups in it. It had the Lebanese Christians.

And I don't want to suggest that they were a monolith, because within any kind of religious set of beliefs, you get dissidents and sectarian divisions. But you had the Christians, you had the Sunni Muslims, and then you had the Shia Muslims. Now, again, there are many in Islam who don't like that distinction. They say, "Hey, we're Muslims. We're not one or the other." But the Sunnis in particular have been a problem over the last 50 years—at least the extremists on that side—insisting that they are the ones who determine whether or not you're a good Muslim, which is why they've so often been involved in terrorist attacks against the Shia. And then you've got the Druze.

Well, in 1975, the Christians—a group called the Phalanges, which was derived from the Roman phalanx—attacked and ambushed a bus. They killed 35 or 36 people, women and children. They were Shia Muslims. And that lit the fuse on the bomb that became the Lebanese Civil War. That war continued for 15 years. A lot of what we see today—the tensions that exist with the United States' view of Hezbollah and its view of Iran—was all formed during that civil war in Lebanon. Because Hezbollah was organized in 1982, and it wasn't organized because they said, "Oh, we hate those Americans because of their freedom."

No, because we were aiding and abetting the Christians and aiding and abetting the Israelis—or the Zionists, I guess is a more accurate term—and they were killing Shia. So the Shia began fighting back, taking revenge, and they did it in a variety of ways. They attacked the U.S. Marines and the French military that were deployed in Beirut, supposedly to help separate the fighters, but they were siding with the Israelis. And the U.S. was attacking Shia locations and killing Shia. So the Shia—you know, they blame Iran for it—but I think it wasn't Iran that did this; it was Hezbollah or Amal. Alastair Crooke also emphasized he thinks it was more Amal.

#Danny

He had evidence for that.

#Larry Johnson

But they blew up the Marine barracks, okay. Then Hezbollah—because remember, while this is going on, what's happening to Iran? The United States is funding Saddam Hussein, who's carrying out a war against Iran that's killing hundreds of thousands of Iranians. Saddam Hussein is given chemical weapons by the United States. Think about this: we give Saddam Hussein chemical weapons, and then ten years later we want to go to war with Saddam because he's got weapons of mass destruction. Right? Well, we gave him the goddamn things, for Pete's sake. So they're killing Iranians with that, and we're providing him actual financial support.

And on top of that, we were giving him intelligence—showing him, "This is where these Iranian units are located. This is where their stores are. This is where you need to attack." We were giving him actionable intelligence that Iraq was using. So naturally, Iran sees itself in a battle with the United States and is supplying and supporting Hezbollah, who's striking back. And then Hezbollah starts kidnapping Americans. They first got a guy—the president of the American University in Lebanon—a guy named David Dodge, I think his name was. They held him for a while, then he got traded for some weapons. They also kidnapped William Buckley, the chief of station.

I believe that was around '84. He was murdered. They got Rich Higgins, a U.S. Marine Corps officer who was with the U.N.—he was kidnapped and killed. And then they kidnapped a variety of journalists: Terry Anderson, Reverend Benjamin Weir, Joseph Cicippio. I don't know why I remember some of these names. But I was involved at the State Department, trying to secure the release of these people in 1989, 1990, 1991. Anyway, my point is, what we're seeing today in Lebanon comes out of that period. And also, let's just throw in one other thing—you want to talk about how absolutely batshit crazy U.S. policy has been.

Remember, we were supporting Iraq—funding Iraq to attack Iran. We were siding with the Israelis, who were attacking the Shia Muslims. The Iranians are Shia; they're trying to support the Shia overseas. And then a guy named Oliver North shows up and starts selling weapons to Iran. Yeah. So we're also giving weapons to the Iraqis, and now we're selling weapons to Iran. And our attitude was basically, "A bunch of ragheads—let them all kill each other, we don't care." But then the whole Iran-Contra affair erupted. The '80s were really sort of a disaster, if you will. That left a festering wound here—in Lebanon, in Israel, in Iran—and today that wound has erupted and is causing sepsis to the body politic, to use the medical metaphor.

Yeah, I'm taking old-guy liberty. It's important because all this was unfolding—you may not have even been born yet when this was happening in the 1980s. So it's important that people understand the context out of which all of this has come. It's not just that Hezbollah hates Israel because they don't like Jews. No, no, no, no, no. It's a lot more complicated than that. And Israel has a good 40—well, if you go back to the Nakba, you know, over a 70, almost 80-year history of killing Palestinians. And, gee, when people react to that and decide, "You know what, we're going to seek revenge," and then we act surprised when they do so—that's what's crazy about this.

So the long and short of it is, they announced a ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel. All that is a ploy to get Lebanon to start attacking Hezbollah. The only way we'll know we've actually made progress toward a potential peace settlement is when Israel agrees to a ceasefire with Hezbollah. Their cabinet met last night in Israel—today's Thursday, so it was late Wednesday, Israeli time—to consider the ceasefire with Hezbollah, and they turned it down for now. I believe that if they continue to suffer losses, which I think Hezbollah is quite capable of inflicting on them, then within about two weeks Israel will be ready to entertain a ceasefire with Hezbollah, if for no other reason than just to stop the bleeding on their part.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, just before this Trump announcement on Truth Social, within the last 48 hours, the Lebanese government was giving indications that it was willing to have discussions—not even about a ceasefire, but about potential normalization—which is, I think, a great indicator of what you're saying here, Larry, about the dangers of looking at this with any credibility. Speaking of credibility, Pete Hegseth was up on the podium today, and he gave the typical "everything is destroyed, we're watching you, Iran, we'll destroy you even more if you keep doing what you're doing—building nuclear weapons, holding the Strait of Hormuz hostage."

There's one thing, though, that Fox News and other Western mainstream media have been pointing out—they keep saying Iran is digging out missile launchers because it's so desperate to recover them from the rubble the U.S. caused. What do you make of that? Because, you know, when I look at these videos—I can't pull them up here since I'm trying to keep bandwidth low where I am—but when I do watch them, I'm just like, I don't even know what I'm looking at. What's your assessment of this? Some people might think the ceasefire has to do with Iran's capabilities being diminished, and that's why it isn't firing back or following through yet on its threats to close the Red Sea or other waterways in response to the blockade.

#Larry Johnson

Well, yeah, let's just step back and look at the facts—look at what's happening. Iran has managed to control which ships go through the Strait of Hormuz because it has a variety of weapons systems that it's demonstrated it's willing to use, which has kept ships from wanting to test it. The United States has been unable to destroy Iran's ability to use those weapon systems. So as long as Iran continues to have coastal defense cruise missiles, short-range ballistic missiles, underwater drones, mini-submarines, mines, surface-level drones, and aerial drones, Iran will continue to control who gets in and who gets out of the Strait of Hormuz.

And the United States has so far demonstrated that it lacks the military capability to change that equation. That's it. That's the fact. So the United States is supposedly concerned—"Oh, we've got to open the Strait of Hormuz, it's critical." And what's our solution? As we talked about earlier—

blockade! So, okay, to open the strait, you want to close it even further? Yeah, that's our plan. Oh, good plan, guys. Really keen. So it just highlights that there isn't a military solution to this, or one that's on the horizon, despite all the bombast and braggadocio coming out of Pete. I like that—they call it "keg's breath." I like that.

You know, because I think the man may have been hitting the adult beverages a little too frequently. It's affected and impaired his judgment. But, you know, the Strait of Hormuz is effectively closed—or it's under the control of Iran. And Iran's not willing to relinquish that control because it now realizes, you know what? By controlling this, we get to have a say at the table. We get to go sit—you know, we don't have to be at the kiddie table anymore. We sit at the adult table, and they have to talk to us because we're controlling 20% of the world's supply of oil, 25% of the world's supply of liquefied natural gas, and about 35% of the world's fertilizer that they need.

And so we're going to start seeing—well, you know, we had disruptions in the markets, and we saw price rises for gasoline, but a lot of that was in anticipation of what's coming. We didn't really have actual shortages because the tankers were still on the high seas, and the last ones are only now being unloaded. Now we're going to see the full weight of it—what happens when you take 20% of the oil off the market? What happens when you take 25% of the liquefied natural gas? What happens when you take, wait, 35% of the urea? What happens when 40% of the helium is gone—that's critical for manufacturing? So these cascading effects are now going to be felt. And as that happens, I think we're facing a genuine disruption in the global food supply.

And I base that—yeah, I'm basing it on one anecdotal conversation—but I know this isn't atypical, that it applies across the board. My neighbor has a cattle ranch here in Manatee County, Florida, and he was commenting, he said, "Right now, I'm paying \$2 more per gallon for diesel." When you go from paying \$3.50 to \$5.50, that's a significant jump—almost 100%. He's paying triple the amount for fertilizer. And here in Manatee, because we've had—and Florida's actually had—a bit of a drought this past year, he has to buy more hay bales to feed his cows. He said, "A year ago, I was paying \$40 per bale of hay. Now I've got to pay \$90 per bale. And last year I only needed 40 bales; now I need more than double that."

I need about 90—well, let's just call it 100. So all of a sudden, his cost for feeding the cows has gone from \$1,600 to \$9,000. And he says, "Look, we're running in the red," which means they may have to sell off the cows. So they sell off the cows, and there's an initial drop in the price of meat—temporary relief for consumers—but then no more cows. These effects are happening all over the world. It's not just in the United States; it's in Asia, in Africa, and in Europe. That's where the economic consequences of closing the Strait of Hormuz are just now starting to be felt. Before, people anticipated what the damage might be, but now it's actually being felt, and it's going to be incredibly disruptive. It could be something as large as, if not worse than, the global depression that ravaged the world in the 1930s.

#Danny

Yeah, I believe wholeheartedly that that's where the world economy is headed. And what's also striking, Larry, about this posture and these actions taken by what our friend Pepe Escobar calls the "empire of chaos," is—just take the situation with oil and how the Trump administration, really since the beginning of asserting any kind of foreign policy, has targeted oil and used blockades and all of this as supposedly a negotiating chip or a prelude to war, what have you. But now you have a situation where the primary target is China. I was just talking to Professor Zhang Weiwei, who I know you've met, and people can watch that interview—it's up; I streamed it earlier today.

And he reminded all of us that, despite all the, as you call it, braggadocio against China around this blockade, China is 85% energy self-sufficient, and Iran makes up about 10 to 15% of its total oil imports—which is just a fraction of that 15% where it's energy dependent. That means China will be okay. Then there's, as you just put it, the consequences for the blockader. So, the blockade—what are the consequences for you over this period? Given Trump's behavior—I even put in the title "Trump panning"—his behavior seems to give off this sense of needing to do something quickly. This can't go on for weeks and weeks because of those consequences. So, your reaction to this? Because I think there's such a level of—it's not even hubris—it's like this attempt to put on the empire's clothes, but they're all kind of off. It's concealing the reality, and it's just inconceivable at this point.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah, part of it is I can identify with how the United States has overestimated its influence and its ability to exercise leverage over China or over Iran. I was doing product counterfeiting investigations in Panama about 25 years ago. There was this one business owned by the Waked family, and the youngest guy—he was sort of an up-and-comer—was named Nidal Waked. So I went and sat down with him. I thought I was going to be the tough guy, like, "Listen, Nidal, we've got you now. You're counterfeiting all the Sunbeam, Oster, Marks." And I said, "I can make life real difficult for you. I can go to the embassy, and you'll never get another visa."

And he just laughed at me, pulled his drawer open, and took out an EU passport, a Colombian passport, and a Canadian passport. Basically, he was like, "You're threatening me with that? I've got other options." And, you know, that was a humbling experience for me. I learned something from that. The United States hasn't learned. It's making those same kinds of threats, only on a global scale, without realizing that Iran and China have other options. The West may be assuming that all we've got to do is squeeze Iran—"We've got them blockaded, man." There are people writing this kind of analysis, saying their economy is going to collapse within weeks.

And you're going, "Yeah, you know, really? Are you people this stupid?" Look, we've blockaded Cuba for 66 years, and we've got every advantage there. Cuba's an island—they don't have other alternatives. Mexico could supply them, but still, that blockade hasn't broken Cuba. And Cuba's not sitting there on a pile of oil or liquefied natural gas. It's got great cigars, good bananas, mangoes, sugarcane, good rum—but, you know, that's about it. It's not rich in other natural resources.

Whereas Iran—Iran's not an island. Iran's got Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan off to the northeast, and they've got the Caspian to reach Russia. So they've got a lot of other options.

They're not just confined to what goes in and out of their ports in the Strait of Hormuz or north of the Strait of Hormuz—they've also got other ports along the southern coast. And the fact of the matter is, the United States doesn't have enough ships to cover all of that. We're telling the American people, "Well, that's the case. Yeah, boy, we got them." We don't have them at all. And, you know, Iran's going to—they're developing more confidence as they go along, plus they're getting more and more assistance from China and from Russia. And you made the most important point, Danny, that, you know, China is not dependent. We're treating China like, "Man, if we cut off that Iranian oil, China's going to be screaming."

#Danny

No, they're not. They've got other alternatives, for God's sake.

#Larry Johnson

You know, will it cause a little bit of disruption? Yeah, but not as much as we'll experience when the Chinese fully cut us off from rare earth minerals. Yeah.

#Danny

I mean, Larry, it's like Iran has been sanctioned since 1979, and any minute now it's supposed to finally kick in—any minute, just wait. You know, it's not like China is a stranger to U.S. aggression and posturing. And it's not like it hasn't been watching what the U.S. has done to every oil-rich nation in the world. It's almost as if the U.S. assumes these countries aren't preparing for maybe the most basic contingency of all—if you're being attacked economically, or if you see some of the most important energy-producing countries trying to exercise sovereignty and being attacked economically, you might want to figure out how to survive, and maybe even keep developing despite all that. And it just seems like the U.S. doesn't realize this. I mean, Iran not preparing for something like being cut off economically? No way.

#Larry Johnson

Yeah.

#Danny

That would just make Iran look stupid, and that's not the reality at all. That would make the entire Iranian political system and its people look stupid for letting it happen. Absolutely.

#Larry Johnson

It's one thing to talk about an economic catastrophe, but I've lived through one in Argentina back in 1984, when they had one of their periods of hyperinflation where prices went up 1,000%. And, you know, in some ways it was catastrophic for certain segments of the economy. A lot of people who were middle class or upper middle class were just devastated by it. I mean, they really lost income, they lost homes. But the thing that was sort of odd was that during that entire period, life still went on. You know, the restaurants were still open.

Car dealerships, you know—my wife and I lived there with our son at the time, he's got three now. We bought a car. We lived with an Argentine family—a baker, his wife, and two daughters. And so, you know, I'd take them out to dinner. At the time, the dollar was king. We could go to an Italian restaurant—four adults and three kids—and the girls, those daughters, were old enough that they could eat a good portion. I could buy an Italian meal for everybody for \$14 total. I mean, you know, the dollar was king.

No, I'm just saying that the West—politicians in Washington in particular—failed to understand that even in these chaotic, catastrophic economic circumstances, life still goes on, and people usually find a way to work it out, to work around it. I mean, just look at Cuba. Cuba's a living laboratory of that. After 66 years of sanctions, of being cut off, being deprived, with the West trying to strangle it economically—the Cubans, you know, they're still alive. They're still living without some things. But that's starting to turn around now, because I think Russia and China's patience is exhausted with the United States.

And so now they're going to bring Cuba into BRICS. And Cuba is now going to have some alternatives—there will be investment. The United States' attempt to impose a stranglehold, that's going to break. And let's assume that Trump is crazy enough to say, "Okay, we're going to send U.S. military forces into Cuba to, quote, take it over." There will be Cuban insurgents who will continue to attack and kill Americans, and there won't be a damn thing we can really do about it, other than try to kill the Cuban people—which just means we're creating more war crimes. The United States has got to stop. We've got to stop trying to militarize the world and destroy people. Yeah.

#Danny

Yeah. How did it work out for the United States before 1959, when they backed Batista and all those crimes, trying to, you know, keep Cuba dependent on the U.S. and essentially colonized by the U.S.? Didn't work out very well. And Cuba has survived, too, Larry. The blockade is really bad now. I know some people who've just gone over there and seen it. But Cuba went through the Special Period after the Soviet Union fell, and that was an incredibly devastating time—similar to, if not worse than, what they're going through now.

And despite attempts to build up an opposition in Cuba, it's very similar to Iran in the sense that there really isn't a significant opposition there. It just doesn't exist. Whatever you may think about why that is, the reality is the reality—it just doesn't. So, you've got a long way to go. And wasn't there—I don't know if you remember this, Larry—wasn't it just a couple of months ago that there was a boat with some armed bandits or mercenaries? They tried to approach, and Cuba just laid waste to them. I mean, they took them out pretty badly.

#Larry Johnson

These were some Cuban exiles living in Florida, and they decided they'd bought a bunch of weapons and were going to go in and, you know, let's call it Bay of Pigs II—Bahía de los Cochinos número dos. Yeah, cochinos, cochinitos, you know. But yeah, actually, one of the things I learned while living in Honduras years ago was that in certain parts of the Caribbean and Central America, the Latinos there have names for pigs like Eskimos have names for snow. You know, the Eskimos have like 20 or 30 different names for snow. Same with pigs—cerdos, cochinos, puercos—you know, it's just pretty funny.

#Danny

It is funny. That is funny. Yeah. So it's a long uphill battle, even with Cuba. You know, as you said, the United States—it won't happen under a political regime like Trump and the GOP, and it definitely won't happen under the Democrats, who we know just have a different kind of obsession with Russia and this new Cold War on Russia and China. But nevertheless, I think what we're seeing more and more now is—and I've been saying this—we're kind of in this moment in history where every time the "empire of chaos," as our friend Pepe calls it, moves forward on anything, any war it wants, any next step in this attempt to slay every single alternative to it, it comes back really hard against it. There's no way the U.S. can avoid consequences that make even engaging in it—whatever we're talking about, whether it's Iran or Ukraine, etc.—almost impossible to do in a serious way that actually affects outcomes. But I'm curious what you think about this—how it shapes things in the future.

#Larry Johnson

I would argue that one of the reasons the United States has been so quick to engage in regime change, destabilize other governments, and start wars around the world is that, more often than not, it's been profitable. It hasn't really damaged or cost the United States much. I mean, even the Vietnam War—now, you know, we say, "Oh, we lost 58,000." Yeah, we lost that many over a period of about 15 or 20 years. Hell, we lose that many in one year in traffic accidents. That's no big deal—you understand I'm being sarcastic. But the fact is, it wasn't really that costly in terms of human life. For those who lost loved ones in it, there's no price you can put on that—it's immeasurable. But from the government's standpoint, from the perspective of the vast electorate—who gives a crap?

And the same with, you know, we invaded Iraq. What, 4,000 people dead? No big deal. Yeah, there were tens of thousands who were wounded—some lost limbs, some had traumatic brain injuries, and some committed suicide. But still, that's not that many. But look, man, the corporations did well. Now, because of the Vietnam War, we basically broke the dollar as the gold-backed dollar at the time, and then it became oil-backed. We shifted to the Saudis, turned the petrodollar on, and gold was locked away. So it's had economic consequences, and so far we've been able to avoid actually paying economically for our profligacy—the profligate spenders that we are.

And, you know, now those chickens—chickens coming home to roost, as they say—may be arriving. The economic chaos that's going to, I believe, sweep the world is something the financial markets, the Western financial interests, have not prepared for. They've assumed, "No, it can't be that bad, that won't happen. We've always found a way out in the past." We may have finally entered a territory where there is no way out—just like what happened to the Soviet Union when it collapsed in 1991. All of a sudden, everything people had counted on, depended on, disappeared. And, you know, yeah, there was a new group of people who became wealthy out of that collapse. But you look at what Russia endured from 1991 until, say, 2000—during that period, the life expectancy of men dropped dramatically, from the mid-60s to the mid-50s. The number of suicides went way up.

Alcoholism was a problem—I mean, it had devastating effects on society. But I like to point to that period as a recent example in history, because out of that nightmare, that darkness, Russia was resurrected. And, you know, I'm not in the Putin fan club per se, but there's a part of me that says, you know what, God sent Vladimir Putin to save Russia. Because when you go visit Russia today, just 26 years after Putin took office on August 9th, 1999—and here we are approaching the 27th anniversary of that—he's made... Trump talks about making America great again; well, Putin has made Russia great again, genuinely so. The culture, the people, the architecture, the environment—Russia's firing on all cylinders. It's a place where you'd want to raise a family. It's a country with very firm, clear values.

And to be a country that's multi-ethnic—145 different ethnic groups, many with distinct languages—and yet Russia's figured out a way. They're nationalists; they love Russia. They love the motherland. And even though it's, quote, a Christian country founded on ancient Christianity, it still lives in harmony with Islam. You know, the Chechens—I was fortunate to meet, during one of my visits, General Apti Alaudinov, a Hero of Russia, just a great man, but an incredible soldier. And so when you see that, I sit there and say, whatever pain we're going to go through here in the United States, there's hope, there's light at the end of the tunnel. And no, it's not the onrushing train coming to run you over—it's actual daylight. There is a future that can be achieved.

But, you know, they had to do certain things. Putin did certain things. And one of them was that he basically forced the oligarchs out of the political system. So, could you imagine that happening here in the United States—where all these billionaires are forced out? They were told, go make your money. You know, we're still capitalists, but you're going to stop buying elections. You're going to

stop selling America out to foreign governments. And that was a big problem in Russia, where the Jewish oligarchs, the Zionists—most of them held dual passports, Russian and Israeli. And so Russia figured out a way to deal with its Israeli problem, that Israel could not dominate its government the way it's dominating the U.S. government. And I think we're in the process of seeing the breakup of that relationship. We'll see.

#Danny

Yeah, those are great points and a great place to close on, because it really does underscore the fact that even the biggest disasters and catastrophes—born, in part, from the Soviet Union—are also born from U.S. pressure. There are a lot of internal issues and other factors. But no matter how much the U.S. wants or takes part in the destruction of Russia, we see, over and over again, a pretty big response that can lead to very positive developments—like Russia, and now countries like Iran, Russia, and China—building up the capacity to defend themselves to the point where it's a new world, and we're living in it.

And, uh, the Trump administration—the U.S. is an empire. It'll have to, uh, reckon with this at some point, and it won't be pretty. It'll be very painful for it. And, uh, great stuff, Larry. This was a great show. I want everyone to know that your sonar21.com blog is linked in the video description below. Everyone should check that out. Be sure to follow, subscribe, and support, because your latest piece is also very good and really does summarize and elaborate on a lot of what you talked about today. Hit the like button before you go.

#Larry Johnson

Let me ask you one question before you go. What's the best meal you've had in China since you arrived?

#Danny

Yeah, okay, so I was just in a city—so far I've been in Beijing, and then I went to Wuxi, where I interviewed Zhang Weiwei. That city, which isn't too far from Shanghai, had really good food. I was actually surprised, because Chinese people will tell you that this part of the country doesn't have the most impressive cuisine. Shanghai food isn't really highly rated. I'm in Hangzhou right now, and Chinese people don't like food that's too sweet—it's a little sweeter here. But in Wuxi, the food was really impressive. I was really struck by the spices and the flavors. It was incredible. The vegetables—the way they did their vegetables—were really, really good. Really, really good.

#Larry Johnson

Did you have a specific dish that really impressed you?

#Danny

Oh, man. Oh, yeah. It was this cabbage and vegetable dish cooked with pork, but the pork flavor was very subtle. You barely got any meat, but it was marinated in pork oil and broth. So good, so good. And the spice—the way they peppered it. In China, in Sichuan, where Chongqing and Chengdu are—very popular now—they're known for heavy spice, red pepper, everything, the hottest of hot pots. Everyone loves that food. But I liked this because it had, I think, a more complex flavor profile for me. And I'm a food person—I'm not a foodie, I'm like a food noob—so I'm easily impressed. But I credit my wife for expanding my palate. I really thought they were also really good with beef. They had this kind of semi-sweet ball—it was almost like the breading was reminiscent of a corn dog, but in ball form.

Uh, and it was filled with beef, and it was really good—really fucking good. I was like, wow, so subtle. And then they had a vegetable dish—they have their own kind of donut in China, it's called, uh, what is it called... yóutiáo, yóutiáo—and they did theirs with vegetables. There was some kind of green in it, but I don't know what vegetable it was. It must've been some kind of green onion or something. It was so good. So yeah, I was really impressed there. I'm going to Hunan next, which is Mao's birthplace province, and I'm told it has really good food. I make a mean Hunan chicken. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The spices there are supposed to be out of this world and difficult for the Western stomach, but I'm ready for it—or I'll sacrifice my stomach for the food.

#Larry Johnson

Go with the spices. If you're not sweating, you're not eating properly.

#Danny

Yeah, exactly. Sweating in more than one way, I'm sure. Yeah. All right, everybody, this was great. Larry will be back on again. You know, we always have a great time here covering this stuff. Everybody, hit the like button as you go, check out Sonar 21 in the video description, and make sure you support the channel if you can. Take good care, everyone. I'll see you again, likely tomorrow—I'll let you know when.

#Larry Johnson

Be well, my friend. Be well.

#Danny

All right.