Scott Ritter: Trump Secretly BOMBS Iran! Tucker UNMASKS US-Israeli NUKE Plan

Scott Ritter discusses his reaction to Tucker Carlson's nuclear Iran warning and the secret US combat operation underway during midterm elections that threatens a wider war in the Middle East. Scott Ritter is a former US Marine Corps Intelligence Officer and UN Weapons Inspector. Support Scott's work: https://scottritter.substack.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 #iran #tuckercarlson #trump #midterms

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by former U.N. weapons inspector and U.S. Marine Corps intelligence officer Scott Ritter to go over the latest developments. Scott, it is midterm election day. But on this day, or at least in the 24 hours leading up to the first votes, we had reports in The Wall Street Journal that the U.S. has carried out what they're calling secret strikes on Iran's Qeshm Island. The United States attacked Qeshm Island on Monday as part of a series of limited strikes carried out against Iran in recent weeks.

This comes as Benjamin Netanyahu has been pressing Donald Trump every single day, actually, according to the Financial Times, for renewed strikes against Iran, and Tucker Carlson is reporting that a tactical nuclear strike on Iran is on the table. Well, Scott, how about we begin just with your thoughts on what's been going on? Iran today—and I'll play it as you're speaking—released information in the media that preparatory instructions are being given to Iranians in case a nuclear weapon is used against Iran's nuclear facilities. Your thoughts on what's going on here, and on this midterm election day, your message, I guess, to Americans on what the real danger of all this is.

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, social media and mainstream media, I guess, have been awash with rumors and speculation about the use of nuclear weapons, either by Donald Trump against Iran or, in some cases, they say that Israel would use nuclear weapons. First of all, it's impossible to predict with absolute certainty what the Trump administration would or would not do. But we can take guidance from the fact that this isn't happening in a vacuum. If news reports are accurate, on at least two occasions in the past year, President Trump has asked the Pentagon to come up with nuclear strike options against Iran, and the Pentagon has declined to do so, citing constitutional issues.

The law of war apparently still is a thing when it comes to, you know, major initiatives of this nature. And for the United States to use nuclear weapons in a vacuum would be a violation of international humanitarian law. There would need to be, you know, a reason. I think the term—I'm trying to get the term right—is "proportional." It has to be proportional to the threat. And, you know, people can say, "Well, you know, Trump says Iran will not get a nuclear weapon," but it's not that. If we're going to use nuclear weapons, we have to be saying with absolute certainty that Iran either has a nuclear weapon or is in the final process of acquiring a nuclear weapon.

And whatever assessment Trump may come up with will be undercut by the fact that Eisenkot, Benjamin Netanyahu's opponent in the recent Israeli elections and former chief of staff, came on Israeli TV and said that there is no Iranian nuclear weapon, that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon. This comes after Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Iran was pursuing a nuclear weapon. So it's hard for the United States to say we're going to act on Israeli interests when, you know, a former chief of staff says there is no nuclear weapon. Now, if Trump ordered a strike, you know, the military officers responsible for implementing this mission would have to run that order through a variety of checks and balances to ensure its constitutionality. And right now, I think that it's clear that it would be an unconstitutional order.

And then the other thing is, I already said that if the United States is relying upon Israeli intelligence, that's shot, because Eisenkot just said that there is none. So let's talk about American intelligence. We know that Tulsi Gabbard has testified that there was no Iranian nuclear weapons program, even though she watered that down later. No evidence has been brought forward that would suggest that Iran is doing it. In fact, the totality of the evidence strongly suggests that Iran isn't pursuing a nuclear weapons program. If you recall, in June of 2025, the short 12-day war ended with Operation Midnight Hammer. That was the American B-2 bomber attack on three Iranian nuclear facilities, including the Fordow underground enrichment facility, which many people believed housed Iran's 60% enriched uranium. And Trump afterwards bragged. He said, "I have created nuclear dust."

"There is no more nuclear program. Nuclear dust. It's gone." Okay, but we know that that's not the case. How do we know? Two things. One, in the lead-up to this most recent round of military action, the United States and Iran were engaged in active negotiations to resolve the Iranian nuclear problem. And through these negotiations, Iran said, "Not only has all our 60% enriched uranium survived"—now, people can say, "Well, they're just saying that"—they said, "We're ready to turn it over. We can account for it all, and we can turn it over." And this was supposed to be a finalized agreement.

So we know that as of February of 2026, Trump had destroyed nothing, that Iran could account for it all, and that Iran was ready to turn it over, which means it hadn't yet been further enriched for nuclear weapons. We also know that when the United States launched the so-called pilot rescue of Dude 44, the F-15 weapons systems officer, the force that went in had been reconfigured, at a minimum, or was actually configured as a nuclear recovery mission, meaning their job was to gain

access to the containers that held the 60% enriched uranium. The things the President of the United States has said, the forensic evidence of what was on the ground, and the location all point to the JSOC mission that ended up rescuing this pilot being configured to recover Iran's nuclear program.

The president talked about, you know, how some of the equipment on the airplane was designed to get the force into a tunnel. So that implies that we believed at the time of that raid that Iran still had the 60 percent enriched uranium stored in these containers. I have to tell you that my experience with JSOC is that they don't initiate operations half-assed, half-cocked. They need extremely good, high-quality intelligence information to go in. And if you take a look at the configuration—at least certain aspects that have come out—we know that there were specialists assigned to this team who were specialists in the handling of nuclear material.

Again, you're bringing in specialists for a specific task. It's not going to be a wide-ranging task. These are specialists for a specific task, which is handling enriched uranium in the configuration it was in. So the intelligence was pretty good. So we know that there was no Iranian nuclear bomb program at the time of that raid. And I would say that we've been monitoring the hell out of Iran since then and would see any indication that showed a deviation from that norm. So we know for absolute certainty that there is no Iranian bomb program. And with that, we're not going to drop a nuclear bomb on Iran.

The president has said, "I will not nuke Iran." He said the other day, "People say I'm going to nuke Iran. I'm not going to do that." And there are a couple of reasons why he won't do that. One, the legal issues—the Pentagon won't go forward with it. Two, he has bigger fish to fry at this point in time. Iran's nuclear program is simply, you know, the off-ramp, the political off-ramp he needs to get out of Iran. He needs to be able to say, "I did something with their nuclear program." But the bigger picture is how to deal with a globe in transition, the issue of BRICS, Russia, and China. The president is very much interested in having a trilateral meeting, a new Yalta, with him, Xi Jinping, and Vladimir Putin. I can 100 percent guarantee that that meeting will never take place if the United States drops a nuclear weapon on Iran.

You know, nobody would meet with the American president at this juncture. So I think there's a lot of reason to think that we're not going to do that, but we need to do something. So now we come to Qeshm Island and that whole area. You know, one of the things I think we're trying to do is something that breaks the narrative of America being stymied, America being snookered by the Iranians—that we have no other options, that we're out of options in the region. We have Marines in the region. They aren't capable of establishing a meaningful foothold in Iran, meaning they can't go and take Chabahar or Bandar Abbas, hold it, and advance inland. What they can do is a raid. It's a Marine mission. It's one that's assigned to the Marine Expeditionary Units Command.

And I think a raid on Qeshm Island, where we went in and took out energy storage and some military facilities—an in-and-out operation—would be seen by Trump as a major victory. And so some of these attacks we're seeing on Qeshm and in that region could be a softening up of the

Iranians in anticipation of a potential battalion-sized or reinforced company-sized Marine raid that would go in, do a very limited mission with a highly visible outcome, and then withdraw. The raid is always about withdrawing. And I think that's what we could be looking at: a chance for the president to put troops on the ground, achieve a victory, withdraw, and declare victory overall. I think this is the direction we're heading, and I don't think we're heading for a major conflict with Iran. It's just not in our interests.

#Danny

Well, a lot of people, I think, are very alarmed by what Tucker Carlson said about a nuclear strike. But as you noted, I'm guessing there would be countless more disasters if a tactical nuclear weapon were used in this war. What are your thoughts on the reaction to what he has said in particular, and what do you make of it?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, again, I don't know Tucker Carlson's source. He's identified it as an informed observer. What the hell is an informed observer? It's not somebody on the inside. It's not somebody in the White House. It's an informed observer, somebody on the outside who is supposedly receiving information from the inside. In the intelligence business, this is literally non-actionable unless we know more about who his source was. Then that source would be the source. So, you know, I think Tucker has taken a very limited piece of information and breathed life into it at a critical time in order to get clicks, in order to get visibility, in order to seize a headline. And he's been very successful at it. But there's nothing to back this up. There's no corroborating information. There's no information that substantiates this.

This is a conclusion based on a single source, in a vacuum. So, you know, I can't get excited about it. I mean, if you look at the headline, of course it's alarming. Of course, the Iranians have to take action, you know, not just about what Trump's doing, but also what Israel might do. And so, you know, it's not unheard of for nations to educate their respective societies about the dangers of nuclear weapons and how to respond if subjected to a nuclear attack. I don't think the Iranians have anything more than what's been available in the press. I don't think they have a leaked Israeli strike plan. If they did, I think the Iranians would launch a preemptive strike. The fact that the Iranians aren't launching a preemptive strike means that the information they're acting on is of such low quality that it doesn't warrant legitimate acts of self-defense, which a preemptive strike would be.

#Danny

Well, that gets me back to the strikes that were reported last night. I've seen these so-called repeated strikes over the last few weeks reported in open-source intelligence, and this is what The Wall Street Journal is referring to. It's very hard to verify what's really going on. But last night, we do know that Iran did down two U.S. drones. I think one was an MQ-9, and one was a different

kind. I forget the model, but nevertheless—yeah, yeah, exactly. That one. And so the media is framing this as though these strikes are happening in secret.

And now they've confirmed it, and Donald Trump himself also confirmed that it happened. He claims that yesterday they hit some air defense installation that was built over the last few months on Qeshm Island. But how can strikes be secret? And they're also claiming it's self-defense, but the U. S., if I remember correctly, was the one who started the war. So I guess I'm wondering what you think about the framing of it and the actual nature of these strikes, because Iran hasn't been in a rush to respond to them directly just yet.

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, from America's perspective, look, the RQ-170 we're talking about was a drone that got hijacked by the Iranians. It wasn't shot down by the Iranians. It was taken over and then landed. They stole it. That's a hostile act. I'm sorry. I mean, I'm not saying the Iranians don't have a legitimate reason to do that. It's a hostile act, which means that the United States has a right to, for instance, look for the facility that was used to do the hijacking. And we do have adequate electronic intelligence in the region. And we probably isolated where the facility was that took it over, and we bombed it. Why keep it secret? Because we don't want to talk about, you know, signals intelligence.

We don't want to say we hit this facility for this reason based upon this intelligence. So it's done in secret. I mean, this happens all the time. You know, the shooting down of the Reaper—I guess the MQ-9, was it? You know, this is the 55th time they've shot one down, amazingly. Again, we would track the radar sites that sent radar signals to an air defense unit to fire the missile. We might want to seek to hit that as well, as an act of self-defense, as retaliation for what we would call Iranian aggression. Yes, you're right to point out that we started the war, but I'm just telling you right now, you know, punch, counterpunch—does it matter in the middle of a boxing match?

Do we call it a punch or a counterpunch? They're just punching each other. And right now, the United States counterpunched in response to what it deems to be, you know, the aggressive actions of Iran in targeting American drones. I'm not saying that the United States is justified in doing what it's doing and that Iran is not justified. I think Iran has every right to self-defense. But, you know, for every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction. And Iran stole a drone and shot down another one. You can't think that that's just going to sit there. The United States will retaliate. And then the next time we send drones in, Iran will shoot them down as well. And that keeps this endless cycle of violence going.

#Danny

Right. Well, your thoughts on the role of the Israelis here? Because I've been talking a lot about how Israel right now is once again emerging as a focal point for a potential bigger strike. And, you know, Arab countries, the Gulf countries, they've been scrambling to mediate and restart negotiations.

According to Mohsen Rezaei, that just hasn't been good enough. And so I'm wondering about your thoughts on Israel's role in what's going on here and, you know, the state of, I guess, the region as a whole.

#Scott Ritter

Well, first of all, we have to acknowledge that Israel started this war. This is an Israeli war. It's a war that Israel has been wanting for some time now. If we go back and reverse-engineer October 7th, 2023, it now becomes clear that Benjamin Netanyahu knew that this attack was going to take place, and he let it take place. And then he exacerbated the impact of this attack by implementing the Hannibal Directive, not to protect Israelis, but to kill Israelis. It was a deliberate action to slaughter Israelis, to build up the death toll and pin that on Hamas so that he could begin a cycle of escalation that would lead inevitably to America joining Israel to strike Iran.

That's something that Israel has been trying to get successive American presidents to do. And Donald Trump's the first one that fell into that trap. So, you know, you see the role of Israel. Israel started this. This is part of an Israeli plan. The Israeli plan is not to leave Iran intact. The Israeli plan is to collapse the Iranian regime, and they've been unable to do so. And so the Israeli actions today are, I believe, designed to provoke the United States into continuing this conflict. As Benjamin Netanyahu said to Donald Trump about a week back, "Finish the job." And finishing the job means regime change.

It means, you know, the end of the regime. So, yeah, that's the Israeli position. The United States, I don't believe, is headed in that direction. Again, it's hard to assess the Trump administration because we went to war on an act of perfidy. We raised the flag of truce and entered into negotiations with the Iranians under the assumption that that would prevent a war. And yet we used the negotiations to actually facilitate the attack on Iran, to target their negotiating team, etc. So, you know, Trump is fully capable of saying one thing and doing another. But let's look at the signals. Marco Rubio has come out and said Israel wants us to destroy regional energy infrastructure.

We're just not going to do that. That's not in our interest. So we have Israel urging the United States to finish the job, and Rubio saying we're not interested in that. We have the Iranian government's speaker of parliament traveling to Baghdad a while back, saying the United States is looking for an elegant, face-saving way out of this war, meaning not to escalate, but to de-escalate and get out. We have Iranians acknowledging that the United States did approach Iran for a face-saving display of power—that we would drop the mother of all bombs on Pickaxe Mountain, knowing it would do nothing.

But we're going to do it, get a big visual, declare victory, and go home. The Iranians said, "Pound sand. We're not interested." But, you know, the United States is not moving in a direction that seems to be conducive to facilitating Israel's wants and desires. The United States just wrapped up a negotiation with the Iranians, mediated by Oman, that people said was intense. They were heavily

engaged. Now, it's wrapped up, but they didn't say it's over. They just said, "We're going to go back and chew on this a little bit." I think the United States is headed towards a negotiated settlement.

Now, there may be some sort of face-saving move by the Americans, like I said, maybe a Marine raid on Qeshm Island where they go in, blow things up, and come out. And then Trump could say, "I win." Who knows what he's doing? But, you know, Chris Murphy, the senator from, I think, Connecticut, just recently said he was apprised of the plan. He called it insane. And he talked about, you know, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and the fact that it could lead to an Iranian retaliation that would be disruptive to the world. What I think he's saying is that we would be targeting Iran's energy infrastructure, that Iran would retaliate against regional infrastructure, and 25 percent of the world's energy production would be taken off the market permanently.

And this would cause a tremendous number of problems. This would be in line with a school of thought that I was leaning into even a week ago: that it would be what I call the race to the bottom. The United States would initiate military action, the purpose of which is to collapse the Iranian economy. And by collapsing the Iranian economy and engendering societal collapse, it brings about regime change, which is what Netanyahu has wanted all along. Now, the consequence of this would be an Iranian counterstrike that could potentially destroy the energy infrastructure of Gulf Arab states, including Saudi Arabia.

The race to the bottom implies that we would get the Iranian economy to collapse before these other economies collapse, before the global economy collapses, and therefore we'd be in a recoverable position. I'm leaning away from this now because I do believe that it's become abundantly clear that we don't know anything about the Iranian economy. We don't know what makes it tick. We have no idea how to influence it. And a bombing campaign carried out in that kind of vacuum, without understanding cause and effect, is a meaningless bombing campaign. Again, Donald Trump is fully capable of doing anything, but he's a man right now who is trying to bring stability. Remember, his big picture isn't Iran. His big picture is Saudi Arabia and Russia.

He wants a Yalta-like meeting with Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. And needless escalation against Iran, where we have no guarantee of victory and the outcome could therefore be a defeat, could just further weaken any leverage we might have over Russia and China in any such three-way meeting. I don't see him doing that. So I see us looking for a face-saving strategy after the midterms. You know, a demonstration of power against Iran, after which we'll call it quits and seek to unplug so that we can focus on, you know, the bigger picture, like resolving the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and normalizing a global understanding of spheres of influence and interest with Russia and China in some sort of new Yalta-like meeting.

#Danny

Well, Donald Trump has been on the campaign stump right up until now, as the midterm elections are underway and people are heading to the polls or have already voted. And it seems like Donald

Trump is talking openly about some of what you said about a potential face-saving measure. Here is what he said about that very same Pickaxe Mountain that's made the rounds in reports in recent weeks.

#Donald Trump

We bombed out, with Midnight Hammer, all of their potential nuclear power. Now we might have to go after Pickaxe, but that's not a big deal. We can do that in literally one hour, okay? As soon as we want. So, one hour. I thought it was 10 minutes just a day or so ago. But, Scott...

#Danny

You know, Mohsen Rezaian—I can put it back on the screen again—put out that, in terms of the mediation efforts, the seven points that Iran has put on the table are still very much the seven points that they are abiding by and want the United States to accept. Yeah. So with this face-saving measure, Iran obviously will respond. And then it's a matter of whether the United States' declaration of victory is also a declaration that they will abide by these seven points. Because if they don't, it doesn't seem like the war actually ends. But your thoughts on this?

#Scott Ritter

We're talking about a conflict that has global consequences, which means that this isn't just about the United States and Iran. China comes into play. Russia comes into play. Remember, China's economy needs the energy coming out of Iran on a regular basis. They need the energy coming out of Saudi Arabia. All of this is at risk. And so, while the Iranians are insisting on these seven points, there's an old saying about diplomacy: you know you've struck a good deal when both sides are unhappy, meaning that they were compelled to make compromises. This war doesn't end without an Iranian compromise. I think that needs to be understood.

What they compromise on, how they compromise, you know, etc. But there is no such thing as a face-saving mechanism that doesn't include some sort of Iranian compromise on one or more of these conditions, especially if Iran is insisting on, as they should, the lifting of sanctions and the unfreezing of assets up front. If that's the case, then Iran is going to have to make a compromise. The logical place to compromise is the nuclear program, the need to get that 60% enriched uranium out of Iran. That's the ultimate face-saving mechanism. As for how we get there, I know that Russia has repeatedly interceded with Iran to try and get Iran to ship the 60% enriched uranium there. I think the problem with the Iranians right now is they just don't trust the United States. Why should they?

But the United States is going to have to make some commitments that can be honored and that can be trusted. And how that happens, the framework for that, I can't say. But China may be a useful intermediary in this regard, and so too may Russia. And that's why the tripartite meeting

between the United States, China, and Russia is so important and has so much potential. Because if you can get an understanding between the three of them on what the role of Iran will be going forward, and on security guarantees... Look at the framework, the way the Trump administration thinks. Security guarantees—what are they? They seem to be economically based. They're not, you know, the security guarantees based on force projection and military power that we normally associate with that term.

With Ukraine, the Trump administration is saying that their best security guarantee is to serve as a transit point for Russian energy into Europe. A lot of people don't realize that until just a little while ago, until the invasion of Kursk, I believe, Ukraine was receiving over $5 billion a month—that might be too much, but a year, maybe—in oil transit fees through the Druzhba pipeline, etc. Trump's talking about expanding the amount of energy transiting Ukrainian soil into Europe, which would mean that Ukraine could be looking, you know, at maybe three times that amount: $15 billion a year in transit fees as part of their security mechanism, their way of funding it. You know, you have to have stability because of the transit of fuel.

So, you know, one could imagine that the Trump administration would be using the guaranteed flow of fuel and such as a similar security guarantee mechanism regarding Iran, and that China could build upon that. You know, we need stability. We need commitments in order to guarantee the energy flow elsewhere. Who knows what's going on? But I think that, you know, Trump has moved away from trying to solve impossible problems using brute force. He can't impose his will on Russia and Ukraine. And he can't impose his will on Iran. So, you know, it appears that he might be using the indirect approach, a bigger diplomatic picture that would seek to define Iran's role in the world in a way that would be acceptable to the United States, and I guess, by inference, Israel as well.

#Danny

Yeah, well, everything that you just said, Scott, I think is very relevant. The big issue I see, though, is that we're here in this place where we have even reports of renewed, bigger strikes coming on Iran. The fact that we're even talking about the potential for a nuclear strike, no matter how unlikely it is—and I agree with you definitely on that. But it's just that the Trump administration did sign on to the MOU. And Iran even put out there, I believe in the last couple of days, an even more abbreviated form of it, where they would supposedly open the Strait of Hormuz in a matter of two days if those terms were met. So it looks like Iran is trying to do this without giving up its sovereignty. Even J.D. Vance acknowledged that they're not going to give up their sovereignty. And I just haven't seen the United States give anything, which makes me think this is going to go on for a while, and we might see many iterations of this.

#Scott Ritter

That's why I wanted your opinion on the economic picture. This is unsustainable. You know, Trump has been playing market manipulation games. He's been getting nations to release their strategic

reserves. We released ours, but there are no more games to be played. When you don't have any more strategic reserves to release, you're sort of at zero. I heard someone talk the other day—I think it was Larry Johnson—about the state of our strategic oil reserves. You know, I'm not an expert on this, but our strategic oil reserves are stored in giant underground salt caverns. And I guess, like anything, you know, you have to maintain these, and you maintain them through pressure. And if you want to get the oil out, I guess you inject saline water, then the oil rises up and you can pump it.

But at some point in time, you've removed the oil, all you have left is saline, and the pressure is gone. And so the caverns can actually collapse in on each other, and that would be the end of the life of that asset. And Trump has lowered the levels to unprecedented and dangerous levels. So we have to reverse this and get these caverns filled up again, you know, just for long-term stability, or else we lose the ability to even have a strategic reserve. But more importantly, the games only affect traders, and they affect the psychology of commodity traders. But the reality is, when there's nothing there—again, we see anecdotal stuff about the American cruise ship in Cambodia that had to stop because they can't afford the fuel.

It went from an $1,800-per-person fuel charge to between $8,000 and $9,000. End of story. We have stories of airlines stopping flights into certain areas in Europe, for instance, southern Italy, because there's no fuel, no aviation gas. We're in a situation where Bali, Indonesia, has no gas. Australia is running out of gas. And running out means there's nothing in the pipeline coming to them. So when we run out, it's not like we go, "Whoosh! Come on in. Bring that on in." There's nothing coming in. That's where we're at. And Trump knows this now. I mean, he's been educated on this reality. And so we can't do this forever. That's why, if they went with the decisive-strike-against-Iran strategy, the aim would be to collapse their economy. But the danger is, if we hit bottom first, then what do we do?

It's a gamble that is indefensible in terms of putting the nation at risk for a plan that probably won't work. So I think, you know, Trump, in the lead-up to the midterms, had his hands tied in terms of compromises that he could make. He didn't want to be called weak. A lot of what the Iranians are asking for is the reduction or elimination of the American military presence in the Middle East—not to return to the bases, to start pulling resources out, et cetera. For Trump to do this, I mean, it's a logical thing, and I believe it's what's going to happen, but there's a political price to be paid, and you don't want to pay that political price before the elections.

Before the elections, you want to posture, be tough: "I'm a tough guy. I'm going to bomb you. I'm going to do this." After the elections, the damage is done. Once the American people vote, it is what it is, and Trump will have to adjust to that. And I think one of the things he can do is just get the hell out of the Middle East—a rapid evacuation. Again, they're talking about a December meeting between Putin, Xi, and Trump. This isn't something that's going to drag on into 2027. We're talking

about decisions being made before the end of this year that will have a radical impact on, you know, what goes on in the Middle East, what goes on with Ukraine, and how the three major powers deal with each other.

Maybe I'm just smoking some dope. I don't know. But, you know, I'm strangely optimistic. I know I'm not supposed to read your chat, but there are people saying, "Ritter's lost his mind. Ritter's lost the script." Hey, guys, welcome to the world of predictive strategic analysis. I've been doing it for a living for four decades now. This is what happens when you have new data and you're compelled to reassess a problem. That's what intelligence is. Any intelligence analyst who marries a conclusion and says, "This is the conclusion, and I'm going to stick with it no matter what," isn't an intelligence analyst. They're a propagandist. They've politicized their information. They're married to it. I'm not married to an outcome.

I'm married to a process of analysis that right now points me away from America becoming decisively engaged militarily in the Middle East in a life-or-death struggle with Iran. The fact that the President of the United States offered the Iranians the fake attack against Pickaxe Mountain—what does that mean, Danny? It means he's not serious about destroying Iran, that he just wants the optics of being a decisive leader. And I think that's what we're looking at right now: Trump is creating the optics that allow him to disengage so that he doesn't have the optic of C-17 aircraft taking off from Kabul or from Bagram with Afghans falling out, or the optic of the helicopter on the embassy roof in Saigon with people going up. He wants to avoid those optics. And so I think that's where we're at right now.

#Danny

Well, you know, from what you've said and what I've been following too, with all the preparations and all the talk about it, any kind of strike would be, as you said, a face-saving move. Something's going to happen in that regard, it seems like. But exactly as you've said on this program many times, it's also about what the United States can do. I'm sure there are plenty of hawks inside Washington, inside the military, who would love to be decisive against Iran. But I think there's also the realistic part of this: you get into that kind of fight, and there are huge consequences, especially on the economic front. And the headlines in The New York Times in the last couple of days are all about the Gulf. It's all about these countries. They are looking at utter catastrophe, and they're already in the spiral of it in many respects when it comes to oil.

#Scott Ritter

Saudi Arabia is in a death spiral.

#Danny

So, yeah, I'll put them up. But I think maybe you could comment on this part of it. Regardless of the whims in their heads, what exactly happens if they even try to engage in an existential conflict with Iran using what they have left at their disposal?

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, again, people have to put their thinking caps on. So here's an exercise. Put on your thinking caps. Let's just deal with some facts. When we initiated the attack against Iran in February, together with Israel, this was a time of our choosing. And we actually had done a lot of preparatory work to get Iran set up so that our strike would have the most decisive impact possible. We hit Iran with everything we had available from a conventional standpoint. And we sustained this conflict for, what, 37 days. At the end of that, we had not achieved any of our objectives. We had expended the bulk of our long-range precision-strike munitions. We had not prevented Iran from using its ballistic missile and drone programs to retaliate decisively, destroying the bulk of American military infrastructure in the region.

The Iranians had depleted our ability to defend ourselves. The high-accuracy missile interceptors were depleted, and we were compelled to accept a ceasefire. Donald Trump admits it. Why did you sign the MOU? He said, you know, just to stop the war. We needed to stop because the price of gas was too high. We lost. Since that time, it's been shown that our defense industry is incapable of replenishing the depleted munitions, both for long-range strikes and for effective air defense. There is a multi-year lead time. We've stripped resources away from the Pacific, et cetera, to, you know, ramp things up. But we have not replaced what was expended. Even with the repositioning, we are weaker today than we were when we started the war.

Iran, on the other hand, is stronger today than they were when we started the war. They're on full alert. They have more missiles today than they had when the war started. Their missiles are of a higher quality. In fact, the problem facing Iran today isn't that they don't have missiles. They have too many. They're running out of storage options for their missiles and their drones. So when we say, you know, Trump's looking at restarting the conflict, understand that if we strike Iran, we're striking from a very weak position. We don't have the munitions to sustain the conflict or to have a decisive impact up front. We can't defend ourselves when the Iranians start firing back. And eventually, we will run out of weapons. They won't. And we'll be in a worse position.

So this has to be the briefing that Trump's getting. There's no other way to spin this data. No other way. We are weaker. They are stronger. And, you know, the outcomes of renewed conflict all fall decisively in favor of Iran. There's no scenario in which we win this militarily. None. So I just can't see us doing this. It doesn't make any sense. That doesn't mean that Trump won't do it, but if you're asking me to make an assessment, I would say that, given the fact that we can't accomplish the

mission the president wants, and the military understands that, this is why you have so many J-5s being fired or resigning. J-5s are the planning officers at the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They look at the plan and say, "This is insane. We can't do this. We can't implement this. It's impossible."

#Danny

You know, a lot of the buildup toward whatever face-saving measure, whatever strike is going to happen, is centered on Israel. And I've been wondering about this. I believe there's been satellite data released recently that shows that the damage to U.S. bases is actually even more extensive. We kind of get this over and over. Every couple of months, it seems like more and more satellite data is coming out. I'm wondering if the focal point being Israel is also an expression of what you said, though—the weaker position. Because this wasn't how the buildup to this war happened in the beginning, before the 40 days launched. It's not really how it happened. But now it seems like everything from the tankers to whatever air defenses they have left is going to Israel. But in any event, I'm wondering if you believe that's also an expression of the U.S.'s weaker military position in the region now.

#Scott Ritter

What is the expression of a weaker position?

#Danny

Just focusing on Israel. It almost seems like the United States is putting whatever resources it's investing in preparations for the strike into Israel rather than across the region.

#Scott Ritter

Well, I mean, if you can't carry out the strike, it doesn't matter how much you beef up Israel. I think, actually, by defending Israel, you're making the point that when we withdraw, you'll be safe, meaning we're going to do everything we can to keep you safe, you know, to protect you. But we're getting out of here. We're done. We're finished. We're not hanging around. You know, we're not going to pass Go. We're not going to collect $200. And this is in keeping, again, for all the people out there, you know, having conundrums about this: the Trump administration did publish a national security strategy document that said they want to disengage from the Middle East.

They want to get away from this. And if you take a look at what we're doing strategically, you know, this is the direction we're headed. We're unplugging from Europe. We're going to unplug from the Middle East. And we want to pivot to the Pacific and focus on defending the homeland—the resources that need to go into that, this whole Golden Dome nonsense, et cetera. The ideas, the

concepts that led to the creation of this national security strategy document are still very much in play. They just had Colby, the deputy secretary of war, go to Europe and explain to the Europeans about NATO 3.0 and, you know, what it means for America to focus on Fortress America.

So again, I think, you know, this is a war that Donald Trump thought would be quicker. He was told by Benjamin Netanyahu that they had this in the bag. He initiated it, and it's gone bad. He's been trying to get out of it ever since. I don't think his inclination is to double down on stupid at this point in time. I think he's going back to basics, which is to unplug from the Middle East, unplug from that. And look, the Middle East is working with him on this. What did Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey just do? They went to Iran with an expanded Mecca Pact format. You know, we're talking about a regional security framework that excludes the United States.

So I think this is the direction we're heading: a dramatic reduction of American presence in the Middle East. We're not going to reoccupy the destroyed bases. And you look at the reason for being there. Why were we in Kuwait? We were in Kuwait because we invaded Iraq. And then we occupied Iraq. And then we developed a military presence in Syria. So we needed Kuwait as a base for Americans to project power and influence into Iraq, into Syria. We're now out of Syria. We're now out of Iraq. There's no reason for us to be in Kuwait. Kuwait was hit hard. There's no reason for us to go back and rebuild that.

So I think leaving Kuwait is the natural solution. Bahrain—the Fifth Fleet's gone. Never going to come back. No matter what happens, the fact that the Iranians can shut the Strait of Hormuz and keep it shut means that we can't project power. So there's no reason to build a fleet headquarters when a fleet can't reside there. So we're out of there. Al Udeid was created during the global war on terror to enable us to project air power into Afghanistan and air power into Iraq. It later turned into a mechanism for containing Iran. But again, we're done in Afghanistan. We're done in Iraq. And if we have an understanding with the Iranians, there's no need to contain them regionally. And so we're out. So I just named the three big bases in the region. We ain't going back. It's not going to happen.

So, you know, this commitment to military action implies a return to the Middle East. I think we're done with the Middle East. I think the strategic decision has already been made to unplug from the Middle East. And I think that's the direction that we're heading. It's just that sometimes you need to escalate to de-escalate. Just an example from history: if you remember, in 1918–19, the United States and Great Britain deployed troops to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk up north—the Northern Expedition. And in 1919, it was time for the Brits to get out. And how did they get out? By bringing everything they had forward, pounding the crap out of the Bolsheviks, and then withdrawing. They were done.

I'm not saying we're going to pound the crap out of Iran, but I think a demonstration event could be an option. And again, I'm leaning towards a Marine raid as something that could be done. It would be boots on the ground, but just temporarily. Just enough to say, "Aha, we were there, we did that,

we planted the flag, and now we've left." You know, how would Iran respond to that? I don't know. I can't predict it. But if we leave and we haven't done strategic damage and we're on our way out, sometimes the best thing to do is just let the guys do what they're inclined to do instead of, you know, punching them and forcing us to turn around and reengage. So it's a complicated situation right now. I mean, look, we got involved in an illegal war of aggression of our choice, and it went badly. And now we're trying to figure out how to get out of it.

#Danny

Yeah. And that part about getting out—you know, I know we're at time, but a lot of what's happened and what's transpired since February 28th has kind of laid the conditions for getting out. I don't think that was the intention, but everything that you just said also alludes to how the situation already unfolding points to the reality that the U.S. is either going to be far weaker in the Middle East, as it already is, or it's going to have to leave.

And I think how that happens is still, of course, very much, you know, up for discussion and for history to decide. But we will leave it there, Scott. I want to make sure everybody knows that in the video description below, they can find scottritter.com, so support Scott there. Thanks to a new member here, and thanks to Sparky for your super chat about giving Marines gift baskets. You know, Iranians are quite nice people. I wouldn't be surprised if something like that could occur. But in any event, everybody, hit the like button before you go. Scott, any final words before we head out of here?

#Scott Ritter

No. I mean, you know, this is clearly an issue that's going to be around for a while. So, too, is Russia and Ukraine, which we barely touched upon today. We just had an interesting couple of days where there was a ceasefire in the city of Oleshki in Kherson that was brokered, ostensibly, by Melania Trump. But the real players in that were the human rights ombudsmen: the Ukrainian, Kirill Donalets or something of that nature, and then the Russian, Yana Lantratova. Anybody who's been following me knows that I interviewed Yana Lantratova in August of 2025, and she's invited me to Russia later this month.

I'm going for a human rights conference and to continue the work that she started there. I mean, you know, when people talk about a pathway to peace, the ceasefire that happened creates that potential, and there's talk about additional stuff. So it's pretty exciting. And again, I would just ask people, if you support this kind of initiative, you know, go to my Substack page and subscribe. That pays my salary. And donate—that pays for the trip. This is an important trip, so any support that could be provided would be deeply appreciated.

#Danny

Yes, everyone. ScottRitter.com is in the video description below. Hit the like button so more people see this conversation. All the ways to support this channel are there, too. I'll be back tomorrow with our mutual friend Ray McGovern, as well as Anthony Aguilar, at 1 p.m. Eastern time, November 4th. Until next time, everybody, take care. Enjoy Election Day, I guess, and it'll be all over soon. All right. Bye-bye, everyone. See you tomorrow, 1 p.m. Eastern.