

# Larry Johnson & Col. Wilkerson: It's Over: Iran Just Wiped Out Trump's Blockade

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## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Friday, May 1st, 2026, and our dear friends Larry Johnson and Col. Wilkerson are back with us. Welcome back.

## #Larry

Glad to be here, I think. Happy May Day. It's me, it's me.

## #Nima

Yeah, happy May Day to both of you. Today is special. Here in Brazil, it's Labor Day. It seems that in the United States it's different, correct?

## #Larry

Yeah, 50, good Lord, now 60 years ago when I was like 11, we would do a maypole, dance around the maypole. It was an old British move. Yeah, they don't do that anymore at schools.

## #Wilkerson

Yeah, we used to do that at Gaffney Central Elementary School where I went. Yeah, we put colored paper around the pole and carried it out like a maypole, you know, ran around with it.

## #Nima

Yeah, let me start here with the latest news — what was said on Fox News, and later on what we've learned from White House officials. What was reported is that the CENTCOM commander, Admiral Brad Cooper, has briefed Donald Trump in the Situation Room about the potential final blow to Iran. And the other point from the White House is that officials stated the administration is conducting negotiations with Congress regarding the possibility of obtaining permission for a full war with Iran. I

don't know what has happened so far in the 40 days of war. Wasn't that a war? And what does that mean? Where are we right now? Let me start with you, Larry. What is your understanding of that?

## **#Larry**

Well, today is the 60th day since the start of the conflict. So they're supposed to, under the War Powers Act, Congress, you know, Trump's going to have to do something. Now, I saw that the White House put out a statement yesterday that Trump basically is considering, oh, the war is over. You know, we fought the 60 days, we don't have to do anything else. And then they're going to wait a day or two and they'll start the war again. It's like resetting a clock. So what I've heard from my sources is that Cooper, the admiral, and his underlings, they're recommending let's not go any further. We've done everything that we can do.

If we do anything additional, it's going to be too risky. We're going to use up too many weapons that are already scarce. Then we're not going to accomplish anything. It remains to be seen if Kane endorsed their position, but they're briefing the possibility of continued air operations like the first five weeks, possible special operations missions to go grab some nuclear material. And what's worrisome about that is there has been a significant increase in the special operations forces moving into the region, not only SEAL Team 6 but other SEAL units. So they're not traditionally considered part of the SOF mission. And then you got Delta there.

So, you know, it's like loading a gun. Well, if you load it, you're probably going to shoot it. So there's that possibility that they might engage in some form of a ground operation, but they don't have a ground forces commander. And that, you know, as Colonel Wilkerson knows, the last thing you want is an Air Force general or a Navy admiral running ground operations. You know, that's just crazy. So Trump, unfortunately, looks like he's going to go back to war. He's not going to take the exit ramp. And so, you know, I don't know if it will happen this week or the first of next week, but I think it will be in the next three or four days. Sure hope I'm wrong.

## **#Wilkerson**

Yeah. Carl, your take. Yeah, I kind of agree with Larry. I hope we're both wrong. Just for the benefit of your listeners who might think this is a little bit arcane, let me try to simplify it for them with regard to the War Powers Resolution. First of all, the War Powers Resolution is unconstitutional. Anybody in the business of interpreting the Constitution, originalist or modernist, will come to that conclusion if they're worth a damn. It was an attempt by the Congress to get the best of both worlds. That is to say, to have something to say about the constitutional propriety, rightness, if you will, rectitude of a conflict, but at the same time retain their wonderful capacity to not support it unless it was successful.

In other words, the Congress wanted to look at it for a while, 60 days maybe, and say, oh, it's a failure. Now let's criticize the president from both sides of the aisle. Or now it's a success. Let's say

we authorize it and let's go ahead. So the War Powers Resolution is a dilution of the Constitution. Nixon didn't understand that. His lawyers didn't understand that. So he vetoed it. I mean, it was crazy. It was no abridgment of presidential power. It is indeed, as H.W. Bush said one time, an enhancement of presidential power. And these reporting periods are poppycock because the president can lie through his teeth, or as Larry just said.

Trump was also advocating yesterday that ceasefire, stop the war. So 60 days hadn't passed. I mean, these are the kind of concoctions. And I've been there when presidents and their teams, like Colin Powell and Dick Cheney and others, came up with these excuses with regard to this sort of thing. All that said, we are at a position now where, with Haig's testimony, with testimony of others that was indirect, like Scott Besant, and with the president's statements that the Congress ought to stand up and take some action. And for no other reason, the chairman, I think it was, of the House Armed Services Committee, of the subcommittee that looks directly at defense appropriations — he was apoplectic about the money we're spending. And he actually said we're spending more right now on security — on the, he said, the Defense Department.

But you look, the security budget is twice what it was at any given day in World War Two. And this is absurd, he said. So this is all going to come to a head, I think, around the time of the midterms, and it's going to come to a nasty head because we really are sucking high, you know, whatever, with regard to our debt. And this is just deepening it and deepening it and deepening it. And at the same time, you probably saw that the meeting they're going to have in Colombia — 60 countries, I think, coming — didn't even invite us. So this is the future for the United States of America, whether it's a climate crisis like this is involved with or whether it's any other issue. They do not want us there, and they will not want us there in the future. Our policy consists of two elements: military power and sanctions — sanctions and military power.

We have no other policy. And I'm not so sure it would be any different were Biden and Blinken and Sullivan back in there. We have become a pariah state, just like our little vassal state in the eastern Mediterranean, Israel, who is now, you probably know, 600 miles from any Israeli water, arresting people on boats in international waters because they're part of a flotilla coming to Gaza. You just can't be a bigger violator of what we always said was international law and what it means. So we're at a point right now where everything that I've said before about this geopolitical situation that is sweeping over the world and returning power to the East is accelerating to the extent that, you know, we are going down much faster than I ever thought we would.

## **#Nima**

Larry, when it comes to the objectives of the attack, as you've mentioned, it could be imminent. It could be any time, any moment this week or in the coming days. What are the main objectives if they go that way? You're talking about a ground invasion. It doesn't seem that would be likely or that it would be somehow in the minds of the people who are trying to restart the war. And the other point is, it seems to me that the blockade is failing, and the Trump administration, despite

having this sort of rhetoric that it's so successful, they're getting to the point of understanding that the blockade is not working. That's why they need a new round of war. Your understanding of that?

## **#Larry**

You obviously haven't read my piece. It's sonar21.com. That's sonar21.com. Okay, look, this blockade, it's a charade. It's completely made-for-TV, made to fool United States citizens. It's not real. The U.S. Navy right now has deployed about, you've got three carrier strike groups, and each of those carrier strike groups has between three and four ships—destroyers, cruisers. So let's go with four apiece. That's 12. Then you've got the two MEUs, which each MEU and this amphibious, they call it an ARG. I forget what the full acronym is.

## **#Wilkerson**

Amphibious Ready Group.

## **#Larry**

Amphibious Ready Group. So they've got three ships for each of those. And again, you take out the aircraft carriers and the carrier strike groups, because they're not going to pull up alongside some ship and board it. So basically, you've got a total of about 11 ships that could be used to board a tanker or a cargo vessel. Well, the other thing is we're keeping the U.S. Navy 200 miles offshore of the rock. We're not getting inside that 200-mile barrier, because if they get close, they get shot. Well, so what does Iran do? Because you said we've blockaded their ports. We haven't blockaded their ports. Nonsense. So the Iranian vessel comes out of port, whether it's Bandar Abbas or Kharg Island, so it stays within the 12-mile limit of territorial waters. Okay?

12 miles out, plenty of depth, and so they're about 180 miles away from the nearest U.S. ship. Let's say the U.S. Navy is going to go, "Oh, we're going to go get this tanker." They wait until it gets out of Iranian waters, maybe into Pakistani waters, and in theory, they go and they board it. Once they board it, they either have to have a prize crew, a crew that takes control of the ship and sails it, or in any event, they have the ship that was used to basically stop the Iranian vessel. It stays with it until they get to wherever the port is, wherever they're going with it. If you've only got like 11 ships that are capable of doing that, that means you can stop 11 vessels. And since April 15th, there have been between 100 and 200 Iranian vessels coming out of the Gulf.

The point is we're only stopping maybe 10% on a good day, 3%. So as I said, it's just complete, utter bullshit. But what's being pushed? And, you know, there's Hegseth — oh, we're tough, and we got us the strongest ever, and we're stopping, and it's going to affect their economy. Give me a break. The number I heard yesterday was the oil that Iran had out on the open seas that had been sold — 150 million barrels of oil, selling at about \$140 per barrel. Do the math. It's about \$21 billion. Yeah, Scott Besson, man, he's got his foot on the throat of the Iranian economy — that \$21 billion. I

mean, it's just the United States is engaged in one of the greatest acts of mass delusion that I've ever seen.

## **#Wilkerson**

Now, on top of that, Nima, I'm coming back from the coffee shop this morning about 7 a.m., and I'm tuned into NPR, and the woman says there are still 2,000-plus ships stuck off the Strait of Hormuz with about 15,000 mariners on them, and they're starving. They don't have clean water to drink, and they don't have any place to go. So what are we doing but absolutely screwing up the world?

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Colonel, there was a report on CBS. Here's what it says: a major fire aboard the USS Higgins disabled the ship, causing total power and propulsion loss. The incident happened in the Indo-Pacific region, but the exact location is undisclosed. No crew casualties so far. And this is part of that campaign against, you know, because they're controlling in the Pacific. If you remember, one of these Iranian tankers was seized in the Pacific. And I don't know how costly this operation or the whole concept of blockade is so far. It's unbelievable what's going on with that.

## **#Wilkerson**

Well, the figure I got yesterday from the Pentagon was \$28.7 billion so far. The question I asked simply was, how much does this war cost us at this point? I suspect that's about half of what the real cost is, but nonetheless, that's a significant cost. So your point is made. And to what purpose? That's the big question. To what purpose? That's what the Congress should be asking. To what purpose are we spending all of this money? And why are we doing the war in the first place? Because there's not been a really good explanation yet from Hegseth, from Besson, from Trump himself, from J.D. Vance. There's not been a good explanation. We don't like Iran. Okay, that's not really a good strategic rationale.

## **#Nima**

It's something beyond that. Larry, since the Colonel just mentioned the budget, you know, the spending so far with this war, the Pentagon said two days ago that it is \$25 billion. But today we've learned from U.S. officials who communicated with CBS, and they said it's \$50 billion. Their estimation is 50. It's twice what the Pentagon had.

## **#Larry**

That's probably closer.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Yeah.

## **#Larry**

Well, you look at the rescue effort for the downed backseater on that F-15, the special weapons officer or systems weapons officer, whatever they call it. We lost half a billion dollars of planes on just that one day. Two of the radars that Iran took out in the early days of this war were over a billion dollars apiece right there. Reportedly, more than 49 aircraft have been shot down or lost during this engagement. So, you know, those aircraft probably total about \$2–\$3 billion. So, yeah, the numbers keep piling up, but what the hell do we care? It's a credit card, and we don't have to pay the interest on it, or so we tell ourselves. This is like your kid goes to college, they get a credit card, and they never have to pay the bill. So you look at the acceleration of the debt. When Donald Trump took office, the debt was at \$37 trillion.

By the end of December, it had gone up \$1 trillion. And then in the next 77 days into 2026, it went up an additional trillion. So it's now \$39 trillion. And if that trend line continues, I think by the end of May, end of June at the latest, we'll be up another trillion dollars. And so it would be at 40. And so this is economically unsustainable. And so this is the economic side of this that's going to bring an end to U.S. military operations. The full weight of that has not hit yet. It's starting to hit, though, around the world and is creeping here into the United States. Just as, you know, the Trump administration opened up the Strategic Oil Reserve and was pumping oil out to try to keep the oil prices down, gasoline prices down. That's now failed. So just in the last three days, the price of gas here, at least in Florida, has gone up 40 cents. So it's going up about 10 to 20 cents a day.

## **#Wilkerson**

Yeah, I run my Toyota Camry down to about half a tank before I fill it up. So several months ago, I was filling it up—fairly expensive filling station too for this area—for about \$21, \$22. I filled it up the other day with about the same amount of fuel. It was \$52. That is going to eat into people's spending. Yeah.

## **#Larry**

Yeah.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, Pete Buttigieg was asked about the objectives of the second round of war, which was February 28th this year. And here is what he said.

## **#Speaker 04**

So they haven't broken yet. Okay, we haven't gotten there yet for all of the—well, their nuclear facilities have been obliterated.

## **#Speaker 05**

Underground, they're buried, and we're watching them 24/7. So we know where any nuclear material might be. We're watching it.

## **#Speaker 04**

We had to start this war, you just said, 60 days ago, because the nuclear weapon was an imminent threat. Now you're saying that it was completely obliterated?

## **#Speaker 05**

They had not given up their nuclear ambitions, and they had a conventional shield of thousands of—so Operation Midnight Hammer accomplished nothing of substance.

## **#Speaker 04**

It left us exactly at the same place we were before.

## **#Speaker 05**

Their facilities were bombed and obliterated. Their ambitions continued, and they're building a conventional shield.

## **#Speaker 04**

Let me try again.

## **#Speaker 05**

It's the North Korea strategy. You know this very well. The North Korea strategy was to use conventional missiles to prevent anybody from...

## **#Nima**

Basically, what he's arguing, Colonel, is that they have destroyed, they have obliterated the Iranian nuclear program or that enriched uranium, but the ambitions are still there. The desire is still there. We were there to destroy the desire. How is that helping?

## **#Wilkerson**

That's the cost of spelling the desire. I would have loved to have been there at that moment when he said the example of North Korea, because I would have just come back with, "North Korea's got the bomb." You know, what an example to use. North Korea's got the bomb. And North Korea told us they had the bomb when we went forward trying to entice them with an economic package to not get the bomb. It wasn't a war. It wasn't a war. We didn't even threaten a war. We essentially said, "Here's what you can have. This is a hugely generous package." And it was. It was amazing it got through Dick Cheney. I couldn't believe it got through Dick Cheney, because we were going to give the North Koreans a whole new economy, a whole new relationship with the United States. Their response was, "We got the bomb, dude." Yeah.

## **#Nima**

Basically, this is the main sort of discussion right now in Iran, because many people believe that Iran needs some sort of deterrent, since they don't believe that the United States or Israel would respect any sort of agreement. That's the majority of Iranians right now talking about what is the future of Iran's nuclear program if they decide to attack us again and again, if nobody cares about these attacks.

## **#Wilkerson**

Well, given the track record of both countries, Israel and the United States, how could you come to any other conclusion, really?

## **#Larry**

Yeah.

## **#Nima**

Larry, you remember when this was started, Europeans were totally, at least, you know, Merkel in Germany was saying, they're doing our dirty job. You know, let's do regime change in Iran. Right now, she's totally against, you know, somehow she has some sort of huge differences with Donald Trump because she put something out and Donald Trump responded to her. But after all, looking at the situation with the way that the United States pushed the whole Iranian sort of public opinion toward what would be the future for them, how do you understand that?

## **#Larry**

Well, um, the United States has failed to learn any lessons from history, for starters. The thing I've become sort of obsessed with this week has been the reaction to Trump's claim that the Iranian

leadership is in disarray, that there's nobody in charge. And this is not something that Trump came up with on his own. This is, I believe, Israeli intelligence that's been transmitted via liaison channels. And the majority in the Trump cabinet have bought onto this. They say, oh yeah, that's true. Because when I started looking at it in depth, Zarif, Araqchi, Qalibaf, the Ayatollah himself, Mostafa Khamenei, and then the head of the IRGC — turns out all five are or were IRGC in the Iraq war.

Now, Pozevsky was actually a regular army, but he was a medic, and they assigned him to work exclusively with the IRGC. So he was treating and saving the lives of IRGC folks. My point in all of this is that all of these guys who are in leadership positions come out of the same background. They didn't serve in necessarily the same exact unit, but they all fought together. Four of them are combat veterans. And, you know, we ought to put that into the context of remembering our greatest generation that were combat veterans, how they interacted with each other. It wasn't one of great division.

And so this tells me that right now Iran actually has probably the strongest, most unified set of leaders that it's had in its history. And we better damn well take that into account, because the notion that they're weak, the notion that they're confused or frightened — I mean, these guys have been to war. Donald "Bone Spurs" Trump has not, okay? He found ways to avoid service. Hank Seth is the only one in the group that has actually had some military experience, and obviously he didn't learn much from it. So, the United States has grossly underestimated the nature of the Iranian leadership, and then the effect that the U.S. attack has had on the Iranian people.

I think John Kiriakou commented the other day, he was watching one of the videos where it was the Iranians in the street waving flags in favor. It was a protest in support of the government. We've got to find another word for it. It wasn't a protest, it was a rally. And the camera focused on this one — let's call her a lady — she would have been a poster girl for a lesbian gathering. She was very butch, exhibited some masculine features. She's the kind of person that probably three months ago would have been an opponent of the Iranian regime, and she's out in support, rallying for the Iranian regime. That's the kind of effect we've had on the Iranian people. And Trump and his advisors, they don't understand that.

## **#Wilkerson**

It reminds me of — I actually saw these photographs. When Bill Clinton ordered the bombing of Serbia, 78 days ultimately — we went after the main bridge there in Belgrade and just relentlessly struck it with bombs. And the second day, they showed a video of Serbs standing on the bridge, extending the middle finger as the jets rolled in.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, what amazes me basically when it comes to the IRGC, the understanding mostly in the West is that the IRGC is some sort of institution, some sort of class within Iranian society that's

different from other parts of society, which is exactly the opposite. They basically have every class represented. In Iranian society, every class has a representative in the IRGC. It's like saying, you know, the American Navy is different from the American people, the American Air Force is different from the American people. It's just unbelievable. I don't know how it's even possible to think this way.

## **#Wilkerson**

Well, that's the way we do wars, generally speaking, Nima. Even if we win them, we type-classify everybody the same. You know, the Abwehr, the Wehrmacht, the SS — they're all the same. The Dirty Hun. It's a necessity to a certain extent, especially when you're involved in what might be an existential war. But it's never really true, as you just indicated. Another thing I would point out, though — and this is the other side of the coin, if you will — I read a report about five years ago, six years ago, I guess now, maybe a little longer. A report well done, participated in by some Iranians in Iran at the University of Iran. And the report showed how much money oil sales generated for Iran on a fiscal year basis in U.S. dollars, and then it showed how much the IRGC took out of that — a fabulous amount of money.

They were taking about one quarter of the Iranian budget, most of it generated from oil sales, oil and gas. The implication was strong when you just did simple things like analyze the number of people in the IRGC leadership and the amount of money being essentially taken away from the Iranian government, which could have been used for social programs, for food, you know, any number of things that would have benefited the Iranian people, was going to the IRGC. And then when you read further in the analysis, it wasn't going to the rank and file of the IRGC, it was going to the leadership. So that is a problem within the chemistry, if you will, I suspect, of Iran. But back to our original point, when you bomb people, you do away with considerations like that.

Franklin Roosevelt put Lucky Luciano in charge of the wharves in New York so that he didn't have a problem with the wharf workers and the dock workers and everything. Later gave him Cuba. You got to use what you got to use, is my point. But bombs fuse everybody. It doesn't matter whether there's a problem between this element or that element. When you start bombing someone, you are doing them a favor, actually, in terms of their solidity, their cohesiveness in opposing you. It's utterly stupid what we've done. If I could give you a plan for waging war against Iran, that would be 100 percent different than what we're doing right now and might have a remote possibility of actually bringing them to the negotiating table. But we aren't even anywhere near that. We're not anywhere because we don't have anybody, Nima, in charge who has a brain.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Larry, what do you make of the phone call between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin right after the meeting he had with the Iranian foreign minister? It seems that it was Vladimir Putin who called Donald Trump, because Russian sources are saying that. And he initiated the call with Donald Trump, Putin, in your understanding of that.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, it was the direct result of the meeting with Arachi on Monday. And the message that was conveyed to Donald Trump was basically, keep your damn hands off Iran. If you put ground forces in, you're going to have a problem with us. That was the message, based on Yuri Ushakov, who gave a briefing to the press yesterday. So it was described as a friendly call, but it was a call putting Trump and company on notice that Russia has the full backing. They are behind Iran 100% in this. So it's, you know, one other thing for Trump to think about. Frankly, I don't think Trump even takes it seriously or that it's going to affect his judgment. I think he's off in a completely different dimension. But he took the phone call. Putin delivered the message.

And this is only the second time that actually Putin has initiated a phone call. So that shows from the Russian standpoint it was a priority. And, you know, we'll see right now the entire U.S. military posture in the region. It's locked and loaded. It's just a matter of Trump saying, okay, go or don't go, and we'll find out. One thing that would tell us that he's going to back away is if he started withdrawing troops, but that's not what's happening. They're flowing more troops, more resources into the region. So that just tells me this is not an intimidation tactic. This is—they're actually going to launch. Even though the military advisers have counseled against it, Trump once again is going to ignore what the military has told him, and he's going to make matters worse.

## **#Wilkerson**

Nima, if they abandoned every other war plan in the Pentagon that's on the shelf for potential execution—there are different shelves for them—that is to say, the ones that are on the shelf for execution are already virtually tip-fitted and tip-fiddled and ready to go. If they executed every single one of those with the military power behind it combined and did it against Iran, they couldn't beat Iran. Right. So this is a joke. This is a complete joke. It's going to get a lot of people—if it materializes, it's going to get a lot of people killed on both sides. And a lot of GIs, a lot of Marines, a lot of special operators killed, going to destroy billions of dollars' worth of equipment. At the end of the day, the Strait of Hormuz is still going to be more or less controlled by Iran. And if Iran wants to go to its second tier of targets, then we're in recession in June and depression by September. The globe—the globe, including America. This is insanity. Insanity is what I'm trying to say.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Larry, how much of what's going on and the chance or the risk of having some sort of escalation is related to the situation of Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel? Because the latest polls are showing the opposite—his rivals are gaining momentum in Israel. So is Donald Trump going to save him with new attacks, a new round of attacks? And the other point is the situation in the southern part of Lebanon and the use of FPV drones. They're using those successfully to put pressure on Israel.

## **#Larry**

Well, that was a point I was going to make—that the report yesterday of several brigades, Israel's withdrawing several brigades from southern Lebanon. So this appears to be a repeat of 2006, where they tried to get to the Litani River, couldn't. Hezbollah stopped them, and then Israel basically started withdrawing because it was taking too many casualties. It has taken, I would estimate, at least double, if not triple, the casualties this time compared to 2006. So it really has become a costly affair. Now ask yourself, where did Hezbollah get those FPV drones? The busy, busy beavers in their workshops underground making them?

Or is it possible, conceivable, that Iran supplied them with the drones? But we were told, oh, we've got rid of Bashar al-Assad. We've destroyed the ability of Iran to resupply Hezbollah. We've killed all the Hezbollah leadership. We gave them those exploding phones and pagers. Hezbollah is devastated. Yeah, now Hezbollah is kicking Israeli ass right and left and forcing them to, you know, they cannot, they have been unable to achieve their military objectives other than destroying every village that's right along the border, leveling it. But, you know, that's the Stalingrad effect. When the Germans blew up Stalingrad, they created some natural defenses for the Russian, then Soviet forces.

And so the same sort of phenomenon has happened here. They create more cover and concealment that the Hezbollah folks can use to attack Israelis. So this is—Netanyahu doesn't have it. He can't point to a victory anywhere. Right? They're getting beat up in southern Lebanon because Iran was still able, over land, to resupply Hezbollah and keep Hezbollah current with the latest, greatest technology, not something old and outdated. He's failed to suppress and control Gaza. And now they've failed in Iran. So he's three times a loser. And that's going to affect the vote, I'm sure, because he may be desperate to try for another Hail Mary to knock out the Iranians, but it's not going to succeed.

## **#Wilkerson**

Plus, the vaunted control over the IDF armored and ground forces in general is shattering. If you listen to some of the remarks that are being made by intermediate leaders, even the head of the IDF as he is right now, if you listen to those and you read Haaretz closely in the way the articles parse some of this, Israel's armed forces are falling apart. They're falling apart. They're doing things that even they are not supposed to be doing. And principally, the reason they're looking at that as a

negative, the leadership, is because that's harming their ability to do their mission in Lebanon because they've gone berserk.

And you wouldn't blame them for going berserk if you saw the PTSD rate and you saw the suicide rate. And that's available. You can query the IDF headquarters. They will tell you what the suicide rate is and what the post-traumatic stress rate is. It's off the charts. It's terrible. So their military is actually disintegrating. And they don't want that to happen. So I'm sure they're saying, you know, hey, we've got to stop this or we've got to do something differently. Let's stop and hold the line at the river or whatever. Let's not do any more of this north of the river because we're destroying the armed forces.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, remember, they said their original objective was to get to the Litani. They wanted to secure all the territory south of the Litani. I don't think they've penetrated more than five kilometers into Lebanon right now. They're still stuck along that border region. And Hezbollah, once again, has proven to be effective defenders. And then they upped their game technologically with the drone. They didn't have drones 20 years ago, and now they are effectively using those drones. It's like you don't need a suicide bomber; you just send the drone.

## **#Wilkerson**

One of the articles in Haaretz was by a former IDF officer, and he said, "How come we didn't understand drones?"

## **#Larry**

Yeah, it's not like there's been anything else going on in the world where they might have learned some lessons. But again, this goes to the heart of the Israelis. They're the biggest bunch of arrogant pricks I've ever been involved with. I mean, really, they assume they know everything. The attitude is what drives you crazy. When you've got an attitude that you know it all, that you're the best, and that nobody can teach you anything—great. You set yourself up for getting your ass handed to you, like what's happening to them in Lebanon.

## **#Wilkerson**

And another phenomenon is that the Lebanese people, who have nothing to do with Hezbollah in most cases—they're just business people or citizens—they're getting angry now. They're getting very angry with their own government, but they're getting particularly angry with the idea of...

## **#Larry**

Yeah, I mean, remember, the U.S. plan is to try to use Lebanon to attack Hezbollah. And, frankly, I don't think the Lebanese—they've been involved with the civil war now for decades. Oh, good luck. Forty, fifty, fifty-one years. You know, it started in 1975. So at some point, you're going to wake up and realize they've got to stop being played by these outside forces.

## **#Wilkerson**

One of my particular friends in Beirut said, in a moment of exasperation, "I wish the Syrians would come back." Yeah.

## **#Larry**

At least they police a little bit. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's true.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, today in the Israeli media, they were talking about how the situation is so strange right now because we have the ceasefire. They're telling us, Israelis, we have the ceasefire, but the situation for Israel in the northern part of Israel is getting worse because... One of the main objectives of Benjamin Netanyahu, you remember that since October 7th, they were talking about wanting to send the Israeli people to the northern part. And so far, it seems that the situation is getting worse, despite having, you know, destroyed many villages in the southern part of Lebanon. But that doesn't necessarily mean that they're gaining some sort of land or gaining some sort of momentum, because Hezbollah is fighting back—not only in the southern part of Lebanon, Colonel, but in the northern part of Israel. And I don't know if there is a solution in their mind for that.

## **#Wilkerson**

No, and I understand they've started to move again. They've started to move internally in Israel because their lives are untenable in that northern area. And they're angry. They're very angry. So all of this is building, but I take exception to what you said earlier. I'm hearing that Naftali Bennett and Lapid, they don't have a chance. They don't have a chance. They're stupid. They're not good politicians like Bibi Netanyahu is. I may be wrong. I may be listening to the wrong people, but then the other thing is they tell me there's not two cents' worth of difference in the way they feel about what Netanyahu is doing as being essential to Israel's future.

## **#Nima**

But, you know, the latest report, as Barak Ravid reported, says the new poll shows that Bennett is ahead of Netanyahu. I don't know why.

## **#Wilkerson**

Yeah, but what I'm saying is it doesn't matter, I don't think, because they're just as bad as him.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, because 80% of Israelis want to get into the fight again, and they're supporting what's going on in Gaza, what's going on in Lebanon.

## **#Wilkerson**

And the West Bank too. They're all for what's going on in the West Bank.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. And Larry, it doesn't seem that anytime soon they're going to change their mindset. I don't know if they know, because today I was talking to Ambassador Chas Freeman, and the point that he mentioned that I think is so important is that many people who live in Israel, they don't know the scale of destruction that has happened during the war between Iran and Israel. And they don't have this national picture of what has happened to Israel. That's why they're feeling—most of them are underground.

## **#Wilkerson**

Most of them are underground. Yeah, yeah.

## **#Nima**

How is that going to be understandable for Benjamin Netanyahu and Israelis right now, Larry—this disconnection, as Ambassador Chas Freeman was mentioning?

## **#Larry**

Well, if the war restarts, if they renew the attack on Iran, Iran has vowed that it's going to hit both the U.S. and Israel harder than they did during the first five weeks. Now, I don't know what that means, but there will be more. I guess Iran avoided taking out the power system in Israel, and if they attack that at all in Iran, then Iran will retaliate, reciprocate. And at that point, the Israelis deprived of electricity will be a big issue. So, you know, I keep in mind that Israel is just a small country compared to Iran. I mean, tiny. And, you know, it's like if you have a thousand bombs that you can drop, and, you know, Israel has a thousand bombs, Iran has a thousand bombs, the Iranian thousand bombs are going to have much more effect in Israel than the Israeli thousand bombs will have in Iran simply because they're dropped in a much smaller area.

And so, whereas Iran is, what, two and a half times the size of Texas, it's said, I think it's like 10,000 times the size of Israel. So what you're looking at here is that the Israeli public has yet to suffer the full effects of war. And it's only going to be when they finally start suffering the full effects of war that they may finally get some motivation to change their politics. But, you know, up to this point, they've been very—it's like you're running Netanyahu. You've still got the Israeli policy of wanting to destroy and eliminate the Palestinians. So that's why I think that there's not an electoral solution to this yet in Israel.

## **#Nima**

Yeah.

## **#Wilkerson**

And the sad thing about it, Nima, in a political as well as an existential sense, Israel has no place to go if it's defeated. It has no place to go. There's no Nuremberg tribunal set up to officiate, even if it's on the negative side for one side and positive for the other. There's nothing. They're done. They're finished. There's no place for them to go. The world won't accept them anywhere else. So where are they going to go?

## **#Larry**

Yeah, well, the other thing, you know, maybe a one-state solution would help.

## **#Wilkerson**

Well, you know, I've been saying that all along. If they want to be a democracy, a real democracy, however flawed, and accept Christians and Arabs, including Palestinian Arabs and others in the region... that's a different deal altogether. They could survive. But not as this apartheid, hellbent-to-kill-everybody-who-even-looks-like-he's-not-a-Jew state. They're not going to survive.

## **#Larry**

Well, and Israel is really, I guess, pouring gasoline on the fire of anti-Israeli sentiment. It started last week with the Israeli soldier defacing a crucifix, pounding the head of Jesus with a sledgehammer. Then another video has gone viral of one of these settlers who runs up and attacks a French nun who's in the West Bank. So all of this attack on Christians, it's starting to resonate within the Christian world that in the past was very supportive of Israel. And now they're beginning to see just... you know, the story of the crucifixion of Jesus and the Jewish establishment being the ones yelling for his crucifixion — we find out that's not a historical fable. That's reality.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, looking at the three steps of the Iranian plan, it seems that Iran has updated the latest version, but it's not that much different from what it was before. And the first step is putting an end to the war permanently between Iran and the United States, between Israel and Lebanon. I think that whoever came up with this plan is somehow a genius, because if they don't, it never happens. And it seems that that's why I think Iranians are feeling so comfortable with this status quo, with the current situation. Because they see that the blockade is not working. They have failed to do regime change in Iran. And they're... Just before, I remember in the first term of the Trump administration, they put a lot of pressure on the Iranian economy.

Before getting out, Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA. Iran was exporting something like two million, two and a half million barrels per day. And then Donald Trump reduced that to 700 or 400 thousand barrels a day. That was a huge problem in those days. Right now, we had a war — we had a full-out war between the United States and Iran — and they're not even close to the worst situation they had before in the first administration. And that's why I think they can manage this. They feel that they can manage the situation with the United States, considering all this sort of nonsense, in my opinion, blockade that Donald Trump is bragging about.

## **#Wilkerson**

Yeah, if I were the Iranian leadership, I would reconsider what, if I've heard accurately, their second tier of ballistic missile primary targeting is. I would go back to the original conception. If they feel they've got to go a second round, the original conception was to hit U.S. targets only in the region — Prince Sultan up there in northern Iraq, Al Udeid, Bahrain, Fifth Fleet headquarters, and so forth — hit only U.S. installations, U.S. people in the region. Not all this massive damage that they could do to the global infrastructure in terms of oil and helium and urea, you name it.

But just keep their hold on the strait the way they have it now, and just keep pounding the hell out of the United States wherever they exist in the area. I might even extend it to the Bright Star preparation center in Egypt, you know, let Egypt know that you can reach out to them too. But don't go to that hugely, hugely damaging-to-the-world-economy tier of targets. It'll get the world's attention, there's no question about it, but I think it would do as much damage, if not more, to Iran in the process as it would to the United States. And we need to bring this to some sort of realization in Washington that this is not worth it. It is not going to result in success.

It's going to result in the exact opposite. And let's stop this. And you take those 10 points, and if you just isolate on those points that are so critical, like relief from primary and secondary sanctions — something, I might add, Obama never did — go back and look at the JCPOA. We were well into it, and we hadn't lifted much at all. And we weren't going to lift because Obama didn't have the

support of Congress. So you've got to have that in there too. But I think if you did that, and you did the business of nuclear — you know, the nuclear business — and you simply said what we said in the JCPOA, I might even lighten up on it a little bit.

And you granted the other points of the ten that are grantable and aren't exceedingly stupid for us to let them have. And I'm really going over the ten points in my mind right now. I'm not sure I could think of any of them that are that bad. You could probably come to a close that would not be a victory for the United States. It certainly would be a victory for Iran. But it would be a better situation than we're going to have if we go at it whole hog, both sides. But what's the world usually do? What usually happens in a situation like this? Both sides go at it whole hog, and we wind up bleeding, and the United States winds up taking, I think, the bigger blow.

## **#Larry**

Of course, it looks like Iran has really toughened up its position. One of the messages that was delivered to Washington by the Pakistanis over the weekend was, when Araghchi was going to Islamabad, then Muscat, and went back, was that, you know what? We are signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, unlike Israel. We allow IAEA inspections. So going forward, we're not going to negotiate on any question of enrichment. That's on the back burner now. That's not even going to be one of the critical issues for us. They said we have a right to determine what our nuclear policy is going to be because we're living up to international law, and so we're not going to surrender our sovereignty on that. That is a tougher position than what they had before.

## **#Wilkerson**

And were I, Ron, and I involved in this business, and you really were doing some negotiating, I don't know whom you would negotiate with because we don't have any diplomats. I would bring Israel into it, especially if Israel's really hard-pressed, as it is going to be. It is already, as Larry pointed out. I'd say, okay, Israel gives up everything it has—everything except the civilian program—and it puts itself under the NPT additional protocols and everything else we put ourselves under. And it's subject to inspections. In fact, we could have the inspections two-tiered: they'll go to one place one week, and then they'll go to the other place the next week. I'd be clever about it. Let's eliminate this other problem that the Omani foreign minister said was the real problem in Southwest Asia.

## **#Nima**

I think that would be helpful because just imagine all of these countries—not only Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey—they are mostly concerned about Israel's capabilities when it comes to nuclear weapons. So if you put some sort of pressure on Israel to give up or to control its nuclear program, that would be hugely, hugely influential in the whole region.

## **#Wilkerson**

Yeah. And what does a truly democratic country, accepting all citizens, need with nuclear weapons in that region? I mean, what do they need them for?

## **#Nima**

Larry, the UAE has left OPEC and they're leaving the GCC. And it's a new era for the UAE. This country has failed to somehow... They were struggling to survive because of the war. What happened was they were running out of cash. The situation, the economy had huge challenges. That's why they tried to get closer to the United States, to communicate with the United States that if you don't help us, we're going to get closer to China. We're going to use the Yuan. And right now they have decided to get out of OPEC and to get out of the GCC countries to have some sort of more freedom when it comes to producing or exporting oil. What is happening to the UAE, Larry?

## **#Larry**

The UAE's behavior right now reminds me of an architecture firm that was in the South Tower of the World Trade Center after it had been hit by a plane. And you go into their office, and what are they working on? Oh, they're working on remodeling some of the floors above them. Good luck with that plan, because it's completely irrelevant. You know, we're leaving OPEC. How much oil are you guys pumping right now? Well, none. Oh, okay. Yeah, that's really going to hurt OPEC. I think you've got a bigger problem than that. Oh, we're going to pull out from the Gulf Cooperation Council, you know, the GCC, and we're going to align ourselves with Israel. Oh, that's a good idea. They're so popular. Israel's so influential in the world today. I mean, this is a country that's committing suicide because they've got bigger problems.

Some analysts say, oh, this is going to help the United States control, not be held hostage to OPEC pricing and how it's going to affect the price of oil going forward. Meanwhile, nobody in the West is paying attention to what's actually happening in the oil market today, what's actually happening to the economy, the economic impact that is a result of the Persian Gulf being shut down now for 60 days. It's the divorce from reality. That's why it's like Nero fiddling while Rome is burning. So, okay, UAE pulls out of OPEC. The UAE may not exist in a year if this trend line continues, because they are heavily dependent upon the free trade market, you know, the free trade zone in Jebel Ali. So that's been closed.

They were, they were their financial industry, you know, with the major U.S. financial centers putting operations in that country. They're dead. They're down. They're not operating. The real estate market, it's dead. You don't see—they really created—part of their strategy was to create this exotic mix of Las Vegas and Disney World between Dubai and Abu Dhabi that would attract all these foreigners and bring their foreign currency with them. Well, most of those foreigners are getting the

hell out. They're not sticking around. So UAE has no future, and yet it's now said, yeah, we're going to pull out of OPEC and we're going to divorce ourselves from the other Arab countries in the region. Yeah, good. Why don't you start taking hits of fentanyl while you're at it? That'll be good.

## **#Wilkerson**

Little Sparta is looking more and more like the Sparta of old.

## **#Larry**

Yeah.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, Politico reported that Trump's call to reduce American troops in Germany shocked the Pentagon. And who's the Pentagon? They're talking about Pete Hegseth. I don't see Pete Hegseth being shocked or surprised by these sorts of decisions on the part of Donald Trump.

## **#Wilkerson**

Well, I guarantee the uniformed officers underneath him will be, especially the uniformed officers who owe their stars to being in NATO or in Europe or both. That is the cushiest—I can't say that word—job in the American military. And it's got perks going out the yin-yang with it. And look what it does to the Europeans too. I mean, think about this for a minute. I've actually had people at NATO headquarters relate this to me. Every time we send a three-star, they get another three-star.

Every time we send a four-star, they get another four-star. They don't need them, but they have to have an equivalent with the big partner. So this is so rank-heavy, so top-heavy, so bloated in Europe, but it's cushiony. It's wonderful. It's great to have a tour there. It doesn't matter whether you're in Heidelberg or Ramstein or Stuttgart or wherever you might be. So the leadership of the Pentagon would be horrified if we were to shut down most of the U.S. presence in Europe, particularly in Germany. Very cushiony there, very cushiony.

## **#Nima**

Larry, you and I have been talking about NATO for such a long time since the war in Ukraine started. And Donald Trump has created these sorts of difficulties, or I would say some sort of impasse, with what's going on not only in Ukraine but also in the Middle East, both parties. You look at the Europeans, they're not willing to get out of Ukraine. I don't know what's going on in their minds, but they want to go down with the case of Ukraine, and nobody seems to care. It seems that the hatred toward Russia is getting stronger instead of getting weaker. And on the other hand, you see the situation with Israel and the Middle East worsening as we speak. And the situation in the

Middle East as well—you mentioned UAE, Saudi Arabia and UAE—they're hating each other. We have to accept, not hating each other, but they're fighting each other, at least, if we can put it this way. What has Donald Trump created so far for himself?

## **#Larry**

Well, there's no leadership. No leadership and vision. You'd think the United States would want to build alliances. And Trump's mission in life is to see how many people he can alienate. And again, I attribute that to his current mental decline. So the way the trend lines are running is there is going to be a global conflagration. Russia has already now changed its language vis-à-vis Europe, or NATO as a whole, which includes the United States. When Lavrov announced last week, "We are at war," he didn't say we could be going to war, or there's the risk of going to war. No, he said, "We are at war with NATO." Now, that word has not yet translated into action, which means military strikes on European targets.

But if Europe continues to, the different European countries continue to supply drones and attack sensitive targets inside Russia, Russia is going to retaliate. And they're going to hit targets in Europe, and then this thing's going to escalate. The same with, you know, Putin gave Trump a warning the other day in his phone call—just basically, keep your damn hands off of Iran. And I don't think Trump's going to pay attention to that warning. He's ignored, you know, he's already shown that the decision to launch the attack on Iran on February 28th—the majority of his advisors counseled against it. He ignored his advisors. So he's just going to do what he wants to do, what he thinks is right. So instead of easing these tensions, the tensions are going to escalate.

And yet the irony of it is, particularly Europe—Europe is at the weakest point that it ever has been, you know, in 500 years. They don't have the military. They have the pretension of military strength. They think, oh, you know, we're powerful, but they're not. They've shrunk. Just, you know... One example of that is, look at the U.K. And now Milei, the president of Argentina, is talking about retaking the Falkland Islands, Las Malvinas. You know, the Argentines always say, "Las Malvinas son nuestras"—the Malvinas Islands are ours. It was 46 years ago, roughly, that the U.K. was able to mount a military effort to go down and kick the Argentinians out of the Malvinas and call it the Falklands. They couldn't do that today. Couldn't do it at all. They don't have the naval power.

They don't have the military, the army capable of doing it. And that same pattern has repeated itself across Europe—across Germany, France, Italy. So they're a shadow of their former selves, but they keep looking in the mirror thinking that they are the best, the brightest, really quite capable. And so when you've got that belief that you're invincible and you act according to that belief, but it turns out you don't actually have the capabilities, it ends disastrously. And on top of that, then, with this economic—you know, at a minimum, it's a recession. And I think Colonel Wilkerson's right. We're going to be closer—it will be a depression, a global depression. When that hits with full force, these countries, they're not going to have the resources to build up their military.

## **#Wilkerson**

I'm thinking even what we had after the recession, then the depression that commenced in '29, took on great weight in '32, brought Roosevelt to the presidency in '33. Think about what we had after that. And think about what Larry was just saying. The escalation ladder is up against the side of the global barn. The rungs are labeled Arctic, Baltic, Ukraine, Georgia, Iran.

## **#Larry**

And I probably missed a couple.

## **#Wilkerson**

We're already on the rungs. And at the top is nuclear holocaust. Yeah. That's not where we want to go, but that's where we're going. That's where we're going. We're going into global conflict. It's going to creep, and then it's going to be disaster.

## **#Nima**

Larry, before wrapping up, just a final question. When you look at Zelensky—because Zelensky is somehow, the government, or let's put it this way, the people, the administration, the Zelensky administration in Ukraine—somehow connects what's going on in Europe to what's going on in the Middle East. Because they were there in Syria, if you remember, training these people, Daesh or HTS forces, to attack Syria. And right now they're in Saudi Arabia and some Gulf states. It seems that they're trying to improve their capabilities in order to go fight drones. I don't know what the capabilities of Ukraine are to help them with the case of drones.

## **#Larry**

Well, I don't think it's a significant capability. I was going to add, don't forget Mali. They're down mucking around in Mali as well. So right now you've got the proxy forces. But Ukraine, you know, Ukraine militarily cannot sustain itself. Right now, the Russians—the spring offensive has started, and they are moving rapidly on several fronts. They breached a significant defensive line outside of Sumy, and then in Zaporizhia they've also had a breakthrough. But nobody's paying attention anymore.

So this has been, I think, Zelensky's quest to try to remain relevant. He's offered to, you know, with their expertise in drones—they don't have a massive industrial drone operation. They've got more mom-and-pop shops and now are relying upon European production facilities. It's quite different from what the Russians have. So this—the limited, you know, I call it the limited expertise they have

with drones—it's not going to be a game changer for any of these other countries. It's just, I think, more of Zelensky's attempt to try to remain relevant because nobody's paying much attention to him anymore.

**#Wilkerson**

And he hates that. He absolutely hates that.

**#Nima**

Yeah, just, you know, he's right at the center, and Zelensky's just playing with him.

**#Larry**

Yeah. Well, you saw that, you know, again, you've got curious relationships. A Russian ship loaded with Ukrainian grain pulled up and delivered it to Israel last week. It drove the Ukrainians nuts.

**#Wilkerson**

Don't you unload that. Yeah. Meanwhile, we're out there in the Mediterranean, 600 nautical miles away from our territorial waters, arresting all these people on boats in international waters, or in some cases even in the territorial waters of Greece. Yeah.

**#Nima**

Thank you so much, Col. Wilkerson and Larry, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

**#Larry**

We survived another week. We're already in May. I can't believe, man, four months into the year.

**#Wilkerson**

Isn't it amazing how fast time goes now?

**#Larry**

Yeah, absolutely.

**#Nima**

Thank you, and see you soon. All right. Happy May Day. Yes, sir.

**#Larry**

Happy May Day. See you on Monday. Bye.

**#Speaker 05**

Bye.