Seyed M. Marandi: Trump Escalates Iran War – The 'Iron Gate' Blockade of Land Corridors

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#Glenn

Welcome back, everyone. Today is Sunday, November 8, 2026, and we have the great pleasure of being joined by Professor Saeed Mohammed Marandi, a professor at Tehran University and a former advisor to Iran's nuclear negotiating team. Thank you for coming on. It's great to see you again.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much for inviting me. It's always great to be on your show and with your excellent audience.

#Glenn

So, after the U.S. midterms, everyone would like to know: what is Trump doing? Will he make some course corrections or double down? And it doesn't seem like we quite know yet where he's going. On one hand, there are reports, at least, that J.D. Vance wants to restart talks with the Iranians. But yesterday, we were told that the United States had also announced this new task force, Iron Gate, which entails a blockade of all of Iran's land routes, but also the Caspian Sea. And this, of course,

comes in addition to the naval blockade. So, yes, I have a lot of questions about what this means. Does this mean all-out war unless Iran is willing to be policed by the U.S.? And what is the feasibility, though, of such a massive endeavor? I mean, Iran is not a tiny country.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Well, the Americans were supposed to destroy the Iranian economy a few months ago. I think, for Bessent, that was supposed to be the day when everything suddenly goes downhill, Iran crashes and burns, and people are begging on the streets. At least that's what he lusts for. And then, shortly afterwards, he said Iran would be effectively finished in two weeks. So what is the need for a new attempt, or a new organization, or a new center for crushing the Iranian economy and crushing the Iranian people and strangling the country? I don't know, but obviously, the attempts by Bessent have not had the desired effect. And this is what we've been seeing throughout this war.

This is actually what we've been seeing throughout the last 47, 48 years. Every time a U.S. president says he's going to strangle the Iranian people—actually, it began with Obama. The maximum pressure sanctions, many people may not remember, were implemented by Obama himself. And he called them, I think, crippling sanctions. In other words, he wanted to cripple the Iranian people. So when people think that Obama is somehow more humane and a more decent person, they should remember the crippling sanctions, with which he tried to strangle the Iranian economy, make people suffer, and have people die so that he could get his way.

Then, of course, Trump revived the maximum pressure sanctions and called them brutal sanctions, which I think shows a subtle difference between the two terms, but maybe I'm reading too much into it. But in any case, this has been going on from day one. After the revolution, the sanctions that were imposed in the 1980s and the 1990s were all attempts to bring down Iran. And those who've been following Iran for the last few decades would remember that Iran has always been on the verge of collapsing. I once did a program on Al Mayadeen, the Arabic news channel. It was a program in English with subtitles.

But I explained how the news reports and headlines in major newspapers in the West in the 1980s and the 1990s were very similar to what we've been seeing in the last couple of decades. In fact, if you just take those headlines and put them on contemporary articles, and put the contemporary headlines on reports from three or four decades ago, almost five decades ago, you won't be able to tell the difference. In other words, Iran is always collapsing. Iran is always falling apart. It's always imploding. The regime, as they always love to call it, is deeply unpopular. This has been a theme for almost half a century. And so now, again, these attempts have failed.

They've created hardship, no doubt. When the Secretary of War gloats about bombing cities and slaughtering kids in schools, hospitals, apartment blocks, and sports centers, obviously that's going to create hardship. But it didn't bring about the desired results. The same was true with Bessent and his attempt to bring the Iranian people—more than 90 million of them—to their knees. That didn't

work, and now this is not going to work either. Ultimately, no matter how the United States tries to strangle the Iranian people and destroy their country, they are going to continue fighting until they force the United States to implement the MOU. Since Trump himself signed it, he really has no way out, from the Iranians' perspective.

#Glenn

Yeah, well, you make a good point about the fact that they're kind of admitting that this is a shift from military targets to economic targets. So that is an admission, I would think, of the failure of the idea that striking military targets would end the war. Because I think the first step was, let's do a decapitation strike, take out the leadership, and in this vacuum, the whole, you know, house of cards of the Iranian regime will fall apart. It didn't work, so they went after the military targets. It didn't work. They went after more of the civilian targets to put pressure on the public. It didn't work. Of course, they were also going after economic targets, but this seems to be primarily focused on destroying the economy. But given that this has already been announced to have been achieved so many times, it can only be interpreted as failure.

But how would you see this being implemented, though? Is this focusing on Iran's infrastructure, then, its ports on the Caspian? I mean, it also looks like a dangerous gamble, because now it's deliberately seeking to disrupt trade with all of Iran's neighbors. I mean, Pakistan, Russia. How do you see Iran responding to this? I mean, is this another effort at escalation control on behalf of the United States? That is, we're going to just go after infrastructure. We're not back at all-out war. We're just framing it as a policing mission, almost. Again, that's a lot of questions.

#Seyed M. Marandi

It depends on what they do. If they try to carry out military strikes on Russian ships, that would be an act of war. Of course, we are at war. The siege and the attempt to strangle ordinary people, make them suffer, prevent food from getting into Iranian ports, and prevent medicine from reaching the country—this is war, a war of the ugliest sort. But unless they start bombing Russian ships, I think there isn't really anything that the United States can do. Russia, unlike Turkey and Pakistan, is not showing signs of weakness. Turkey and Pakistan are under duress from the United States. After all, they're both in the American camp. If for no other reason than their own economic concerns, they still resist, and trade does go through, although with greater difficulty than before.

And Iran has trade routes that go through Pakistan, through Afghanistan, through Turkmenistan, through the Caspian Sea to Kazakhstan and Russia. Then it has trade routes through Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey and Iraq. These are all land routes. And that's a lot of countries, and that's a lot of land routes. And so it's not really that easy to stop trade between Iran and these different countries. It's, I think, almost impossible. Perhaps the Americans may have some success here and there. Erdogan folded, for example, when the Americans began to attempt to cut off flights to and from Iran, which was basically an attempt to prevent medicine from coming into the country. Most

of Iran's medicine is produced inside the country, although the Americans did bomb pharmaceutical factories. But at least most of the medicine that is imported from abroad comes by plane.

The most important thing for the Iranian economy that the airlines deal with is medicine. And so what the Americans tried to do was create a medical crisis in Iran so that people would die because of a lack of medicine. So when the Americans and Bessent tried to cut off flights to and from Iran, one of the first countries that folded was Turkey. But it continued to resist as well. So it sort of backed down and then tried to continue with business and trade with Iran. It stood somewhere in the middle. But Russia and China have shown no weakness. And I find it difficult to imagine that the Americans would like to escalate militarily with Russia. And I don't see how, other than through some sort of military strike on a Russian ship, the United States could prevent the Iranian-Russian trade relationship from continuing as usual. The same is true with China.

#Glenn

Since you're mentioning Russia and China, we see now that the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, just met with Iran's national security chief. There have been some reports that they're discussing not just intelligence assistance, but also missiles. I'm not sure whether they're interceptor missiles or missiles for offensive purposes. I was wondering, what do we know about this? Because we also see that China is quite renowned for having always attempted to avoid military alliances.

But we hear some unconfirmed reports that there's a lot of pressure on China, that they're being left with little option because of the U.S. hostilities against Iran, and that they can't simply sit there. Well, the U.S. openly talks about this, you know? "Once we knock out the Russians, we can focus on China. Oh, look at all the energy we're cutting off from Iran. This was going to go to China. We're weakening China." So they're openly making the point that China is a target. You know, when the U. S. is now at war with Russia and Iran, China is a target. So it does put a lot of pressure on China not to sit on the fence to such an extent. So, Putin meeting Iran's national security chief and China's shifting sentiments, perhaps—what do we know about this?

#Seyed M. Marandi

A couple of things, and this is sheer speculation on my part. Before I get to General Rezaei, the chair of the Supreme National Security Council, things have not been going well for Trump because of his catastrophic defeat in the midterms and Netanyahu's defeat in the Israeli regime elections. I could add Brazil and perhaps even Serbia to that. Of course, the midterms are by far the most important thing. It was truly catastrophic. I would imagine that this impacts Trump's clout across the world, and that would also, of course, affect his dealings with Iran. So one could imagine—and again, this is just speculation, and it's still a bit early.

But one can imagine that countries that are being harassed by the United States to discontinue cooperation with Iran would probably show more resilience and resistance under these

circumstances because they see that Trump has been weakened. And I would imagine that would include Russia and China. Russia, China, and Iran—the three countries do cooperate a lot. But if there is pressure coming from the United States under these circumstances, I'm not sure how effective Trump's threats or his pressure would be now that he's seen as an extremely vulnerable and weak president. With regard to General Rezaei's trip to Russia, I think it was a very important event.

I don't know the details, but it's especially important since he had a phone conversation with President Putin before the trip. And he is not President Putin's equal. President Putin is the head of state, and Dr. Rezaei is a very important person, but he is lower in rank. And the fact that President Putin spoke with him, I think, shows, first of all, the very close relationship between the two countries. But I think it has its own significance, without a doubt. And then his trip to Moscow and the meeting with President Putin, which lasted well over three hours, show that something important is happening.

My understanding is that this was a meeting to discuss the future of Iran-Russia relations. The two countries have important projects that they're working on. One is the North-South Transport Corridor, which will be completed after the railway between the cities of Astara and Rasht in Iran is completed. That has been slow because some of the land in that area—a forested area in Iran—belongs to the state and is protected. So they had to find a solution that would not cause extensive damage to the environment and also purchase privately owned land.

And they've been raising their prices because they know that the government needs that land for a railway. That issue has been resolved, and now the government holds all the land necessary for the railway connection. And it's going to be implemented swiftly. When that happens, Russia will no longer need the Mediterranean for most of its trade. It will no longer have to risk NATO intercepting its ships, and the route through Iran is also much shorter to Asia and Africa. So that will be a big shift, and Iran will become a hub for Russian grains, Russian wheat. And then, also on this trip, they discussed a gas pipeline to Iran, where Iran could use the gas, but it would also be exported to other countries in West Asia and the subcontinent. So Iran will become a gas hub for Russia as well. Then, of course, there's the military cooperation.

The two militaries have been cooperating closely, both since the war in Ukraine and when the two countries were fighting together against the U.S. project in Syria, where the U.S. was funding ISIS and al-Qaeda. And since the war in Ukraine, Iran has obviously assisted the Russians, and the Russians are cooperating with and assisting Iran. The military cooperation between the two countries has evolved dramatically over the years. Today, the relationship between Iran and Russia is at a high point. I don't think that in the history of the two countries, the relationship has ever been this good. And everyone can thank Trump and the United States for that. But I think that this meeting was quite important, and it was not just about military cooperation. My understanding is that they actually did not have much to say about Trump and negotiations. It was mostly about bilateral cooperation.

#Glenn

Yeah, this is almost an impressive achievement on the part of the Americans, because there's always been some historical distrust between the Russians and both the Chinese and the Iranians. And, of course, relations with the Chinese improved a bit sooner. But overall, the common threats they all face from the United States have brought them closer together. This is often referred to as Kissinger's worst nightmare. That is because his goal was always to try to divide the large Eurasian powers to make sure they don't get too close. Well, the sentiment was that as long as they fear each other more than they fear the U.S., then the U.S. will achieve a favorable balance of power in which it can operate and maneuver in a better way.

But now, of course, pulling all these countries together in this way, I mean, I would say it's quite positive in terms of peace on the Eurasian continent that you have this many human connections and this much economic connectivity. But for the U.S., with its hegemonic policy, you know, you maintain hegemony through divide and rule, not by bringing together all your main adversaries. So it's quite incredible what we see. But no, I agree. I remember reading journals back during the war in Syria in which the Russians were essentially discussing how to build on this very limited cooperation in Syria to overcome the historical differences with the Iranians and build a more strategic partnership as part of their pivot to the East, instead of seeking a common European home.

And, well, you can't reach any conclusion other than that this has been achieved, but, of course, with American help. I did want to ask what I initially began with, though. We hear that J.D. Vance wants to restart talks with the Iranians. And then, at the same time, we have this massive escalation now. If Trump doesn't want war, certainly this will bring war to him. How do you read this? I mean, is this using diplomacy in a deceptive way, trying to get the Iranians to think, "Here's a possibility of peace," while we're discussing it, we're going to do something horrible, such as carry out bombings?

Or is this an internal fight within the United States? Because, you know, you get the same impression with Ukraine. That is, you know, the CIA and the intelligence agencies run their own war against Russia, even though Trump wants to pull it back. At least that's what we're told. And now you see the same kind of thing within the U.S., where J.D. Vance openly criticized the Israelis and the Iran war, blaming it for the electoral defeat, while others are now saying, “Well, we have nothing to lose. Let's go all out against the Iranians.”

#Seyed M. Marandi

Is this internal division or deception, I guess? Well, J.D. Vance, by putting out that post, has taken an interesting position. The fact that he said it in public is, I think, important because it is a criticism of Trump and, of course, the Israeli regime. So I think it's more than just for show. Not that J.D. Vance, of course, is someone who has shown consistency over the years. He's changed his position on many things in the past. Of course, the most famous example is Trump himself. He once upon a

time hated Trump, despised Trump, and then suddenly became Trump's ally and vice president. But still, it's an important post. It's difficult to say which direction Trump will go because the Zionists, of course, want war, and his other allies want to continue with the economic pressure and economic warfare.

What I think is somewhat interesting is his choice for chief of staff. Of course, the circumstances in which he was chosen are a bit unclear. Some say it was very sudden. But in any case, he is a hardliner and extremely hostile towards Iran. So it's difficult to read which way Trump will go. I'm not optimistic that Trump is going to take the road to reason. And so I would imagine, and I may be wrong, that the weeks ahead are going to be some of the most sensitive weeks in contemporary human history. Why? Because of what we've discussed in the past: if Trump does move towards escalation against Iran, then we will have escalation coming from Tehran as well.

And the situation in the region is very sensitive and increasingly fragile. If there is war, I think that, especially with what's going on in Yemen and the retaliatory strikes that we're seeing from Yemen against Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia is in bad shape, and things are not good. And the Saudis are actually turning to Iran to see what Iran can do for them. And the Iranians have been quite clear that they're not going to impose anything or try to impose anything on Yemen. But in any case, it does show the desperate situation of the Saudis that they are turning to Iran right now. But all that aside, the situation in West Asia is very fragile. And if there is escalation, I think there will be economic collapse.

I'm sure there will be economic collapse if we take Senator Murphy's interpretation of the war plan as valid, and I don't see why we shouldn't. So if the United States goes after Iran's infrastructure, then Iran will go after infrastructure. I can't see any other reason for the United States to restart a war, because militarily they can't defeat Iran. Iran has the upper hand. Iran's assets are all underground, and they're very much in place to deal major punishment. So that's the only thing that would make sense. I mean, it doesn't make sense because it's barbaric and inhumane, and these are crimes against humanity.

Well, if he wants to escalate, the only thing that makes sense for him to have any sort of chance of really hurting Iran would be to target ordinary Iranians, which he's done before, and the Israelis have done before. They began this war by killing kids. But if that happens, then Iran will take out everything on the other side of the Persian Gulf. It will strike the Israeli regime, but the oil and gas exports from the region will come to an end. All exports will come to an end, and that will lead to a global collapse. And the reason why Trump lost the election was because of the economic hardship that has been imposed on the American people.

The reason why we have riots and protests and anger in Europe is because of the economic crisis, which is partially due to the war in Ukraine, but to a large degree nowadays, it's because of the war against Iran. So this is only going to make things a whole lot worse if that happens. And I personally think that if Trump does go back to war and the economy collapses, given the “no” vote that the

American people have given him and his war, that will probably, in my opinion, lead to his removal from office. Because I think the Democrats will definitely vote against him. And I think you'll find enough Republicans under those circumstances to get him out of office.

So he doesn't have many good options. Logically speaking, you would think that now is the time for a deal and for him to go back to the MOU and implement it in some sort of creative way that is less hurtful for him but would also meet Iran's requirements. But then again, we're talking about Trump. We're talking about the White House. The United States, when it comes to Iran, never acts with great reason. And its policies towards Iran have always been very emotional. I think that's because of Zionist influence more than anything else, especially in the last two or three decades. But we'll have to wait and see.

That's why I always advise people to buy and read the book Going to Tehran by two former White House officials, Flynt and Hillary Leverett, so that they can have a more objective understanding of Iran. They deal with a lot of the myths that American policymakers believe or want to believe. Based on those false understandings of Iran, a lot of their decisions are driven by their own emotions and their hatred for Iran. But in any case, since we're dealing with an emotional political establishment in Washington and a particularly emotional president, I would imagine that the chances for war are high and the chances for the implementation of the MOU before January are low.

#Glenn

I do think that there are a lot of emotions involved in what is known as the escalation trap. That is, what you see Trump doing, essentially, is acting much like a gambler. He will continue to double down, hoping that he will eventually walk away with a victory. Because whatever minor objectives he might have had initially, when he doesn't achieve them, you see the losses that Trump incurs. Then he keeps doubling down, and every time it gets worse and worse. But if he can just pull off one victory, one big victory, then everything is reset. Then he walks home with the money, essentially. This is the assumption. But again, with every escalation, every time he doubles down, he sinks further and further into debt there.

Well, my point is, it's not as if this has a very reasonable chance of success. I mean, what else are they going to do? What's going to be done differently? So obviously, I don't think it's motivated by the likelihood of success. I think it's motivated more by the fact that they've already bet so much on this, and there's so much riding on it. And at some point, he's just going to have to pay the piper. And this is his legacy. It's the Republicans. It's the United States. I mean, they've bet everything on this, and they're losing. So I can understand why there are emotions involved, is what I'm trying to say. But you mentioned the Saudis, who might cut a deal.

#Seyed M. Marandi

One thing, just one slight intervention. Actually, what you said is exactly what General Soleimani once famously said about Trump. He said that he is a gambler. And General Soleimani knew the United States quite well. Not only was he a very smart person and a very decent person as well, but Iran knows more about the United States than many people think. It's not only because English is our second language. Many of our academics go to the West to study. We have many people who speak fluent English and travel to the West. Some people have relatives who live in the West or the United States. That aside, that's true of many countries.

But during the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, these were two theaters that were, of course, under his authority. And so he basically helped the Taliban and the resistance in Iraq force the Americans out. That was his job. But also, the United States' presence in Afghanistan and Iraq was unique. The U.S. embassies in Iraq and Afghanistan were different from those in other countries. They had huge staffs, and they had lots of access. I don't know why, but they had lots of access to classified information, to the inner workings of Washington. And a lot of people had authorization. In addition, there was a huge U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, of course.

And they were very powerful people who would come and go. And Iran was smart. It was able to get a lot of information through Iraq and Afghanistan about the United States and about the inner workings of the state. So I would argue that Iran probably, over these years, learned more about how the United States works than NATO allies did, because a lot of this information could easily be obtained. Let me put it that way. So General Soleimani was in charge of these two theaters, and so he knew a lot about how the United States functioned. And once, in a very famous speech, he did call Trump a gambler. And I think that's exactly correct. And I think your assessment is very, very, very, very correct.

And this, of course, makes everything all the more dangerous because Trump sees there's a failed policy, and instead of walking away and accepting defeat, or at least muddying the waters and escaping and trying to divert attention to something else, he doubles down. And that is what's leading the world towards greater danger. That's what has caused so much suffering across the world. That is what has angered so many Americans. And that's why Europeans on the streets are so angry as well, because instead of walking away, he doubles down in the hope that he will be able to pull a rabbit out of the hat. But I don't see that happening. He may be able to create unrest in Iran here and there in the coming months by trying to starve the Iranian people, by trying to bring Iranians to their knees.

But it's not going to succeed. Even if there is unrest here or there, it's not going to change the Iranian position. The Iranian people see that their only path to freedom from Trump is to force him to accept the MOU. And they know that if they appease Trump, he will not behave more reasonably. Instead, he will double down. He'll become more aggressive, and he'll be more demanding. So this is not going to work, especially now that the Iranians have seen Trump defeated. They've seen what

has happened in the elections. They jokingly say, "We carried out regime change in the United States and, most likely, in Israel." So morale has been impacted in a positive way in Tehran.

#Glenn

Well, I always thought that Trump, in terms of his foreign policy at least, is the president of low-hanging fruit. That is, he would like to make a small bet with a possible big payout. I mean, this is what you saw him do with Panama. He threatened Panama, you know: "The Panama Canal is sovereign territory of the US. We might take the whole thing." And then what do they do? They walk away from their partnership with China a bit, and they give the US preferential deals. Then he claims victory and walks away. All it cost him was a few words and, of course, the reputation of the US. But nonetheless, it's low-hanging fruit. So, the same with Venezuela. A one-day operation, and now he can go behind the podium and make these huge claims that, you know, now all the oil of Venezuela is ours.

Same with Greenland: he threatened to take it. Then they gave these rights, which I would define, at least, as ceding some sovereignty in terms of them not being able to make independent decisions on economic deals anymore. And I think, you know, to some extent, that's what he was going for in Yemen as well. Just bomb very hard. It doesn't work? Okay, declare victory and go home. I think the problem with Iran was that there's no going back to the old status quo. The bases are gone. The Strait of Hormuz is under Iranian administrative control. And he wishes he could get the JCPOA back, essentially. Yeah, I think that's why he probably wishes he weren't in this war. I think he hoped it was the ultimate low-hanging fruit.

He was told by his people, you know, "All the Iranians hate the government. Just bomb the people, kill the leadership, and then the house of cards will fall down." Yes, the Gulf states. You mentioned Saudi Arabia, that they might be cutting deals with the Iranians. I had an interview a few days ago with Trump's former counterterrorism chief, Joe Kent, who resigned in opposition to the war with Iran. He also said that, well, he doesn't have the evidence, but he assumes that many of the Gulf states are secretly cutting deals with the Iranians because, even if those deals aren't implemented today, you need to set the stage for what happens once the U.S. eventually accepts defeat. Do we know anything about any dealings between the Gulf states and Iran on this?

#Seyed M. Marandi

I think he's correct. I think that's happening across the board. As we were discussing earlier, Turkey, Pakistan, and even Iraq are all under enormous pressure from Washington. Iraq is particularly vulnerable because all the money from Iraqi oil sales goes to the United States. Ever since Saddam invaded Kuwait, that's been the law, and that allows Trump to strangle the Iraqi economy through that mechanism. But Turkey and Pakistan are under a lot of pressure from Washington, and so some of their dealings with Iran are under the table. I mean, Iran is quite happy to do it openly, but they do it under the table.

And I think the same is true with some of the dealings, some of the policies, some of the economic exchanges. And I think the same is true with the countries in the Persian Gulf. We are hearing about deals. We are hearing that, for example, the ships that go through pay the Iranians for the right to go through the Strait of Hormuz. We hear about cooperation happening between some of these countries anyway. Iran, of course, sees them all as adversaries because they allow the United States to use their territory every day against Iran. When the Americans strike Iranian positions, they fly over their airspace.

Even when they take off from the Israeli regime, they fly over Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, and these countries refuel jets that also fly over them. So Iran sees them as adversaries. But on the other hand, while these countries are assisting the United States against Iran, they know how vulnerable they are. And increasingly, they are becoming worried. They're very worried now, because if this continues, their economic situation will deteriorate further. And these are just family dictatorships. Whether it's Kuwait, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, or Qatar, they're all family dictatorships. And if there's instability, there could be unrest.

And once things begin to wobble, they could fall very fast because, again, there's no civil society. It's just a family. And fragility can lead to swift collapse. So they are doing deals with Iran. And I don't know how much they cooperate with each other, but they know that the United States cannot sustain its hegemony in the region. They bet on the wrong horse. They supported the United States against Iran, and they paid the heaviest price of all. They paid a heavier price than anyone else, except, of course, for the Iranian people who were murdered. But as countries, they paid the heaviest price. The United States failed to protect them. The United States does not prioritize them.

It prioritizes protecting the Israeli regime with whatever it has. And they see that. These are huge bases, Glenn. I've been told that the U.S. military base in Bahrain is one-third of the country. In Kuwait, it's a network of bases, and so on. So despite what used to be an impressive U.S. presence, which gave them a false sense of security, now all they see are destroyed bases that have been emptied. And so they know that the Americans are not going to return, and the United States has been weakened. And now Trump has taken a horrific beating in the election. So they know where things are heading, and therefore they need to do deals with Iran.

#Glenn

Just a last question. Two days ago, we saw this U.S. strike on Qeshm Island, quite a strategic island for Iran. What is happening? What does all of this mean? I mean, how close are we to being back at war? Because, you know, I thought we had bought ourselves some time when Trump apparently called off these strikes, we're told. Again, I'm not sure what's political theater or deception or what's real, but apparently there were talks about whether or not they should launch a strike, and Trump had reportedly said, "Let's wait. Not yet." I think "not yet" was the phrase. So how do you interpret this event? And again, how close are we?

#Seyed M. Marandi

We are close. The United States has carried out strikes against Iran a number of times over the past couple of weeks in response to Iran's strikes on ships. Because Americans know that if this continues for much longer, the energy crisis will become much worse, not just because of the shortage of energy itself, but because of the shortage of tankers. Every day, tankers are being badly damaged. Two or three months ago, when the Iranians would strike tankers, they would often hit them with drones and do slight damage, just to teach them a lesson. Now they're firing missiles, they're firing multiple heavy drones, and they're using mines and other means to cause serious damage to these ships.

And there's only a limited number of tankers in the world. And repairing them can only be done in certain places, and it's a time-consuming process. So the Iranians are making things progressively worse for the United States. For a while, the Americans were quiet. More recently, they've carried out some strikes with limited success. The Iranians are very sophisticated in their fighting. They're very mobile. They have underground bases, and they use deceptive means to fool American forces a lot. There haven't been a lot of strikes, but some of the strikes that the Americans carried out hit what appeared to be targets but turned out to be just decoys.

But the Iranians are striking ships on a daily basis in large numbers, so the Americans haven't had any impact on Iran's capabilities. So far, the Iranians have not decided to retaliate directly, except for downing drones and firing missiles at US jets or at US ships. But that may change. So far, the Iranians feel that they have the upper hand because the pressure continues and Trump is in a weakened position. And Iran will continue to put pressure on Trump to see if he'll change his position and be reasonable and do a deal. But we're in a very dangerous situation, Ben. When there is fighting, when there is a siege, some small event could lead to escalation, and that could lead to all-out war.

But in any case, Trump may move in that direction anyhow. That may be his decision. The next few weeks will be his last opportunity to gamble and get away with it. But I think this is going to be the biggest gamble of his life. And perhaps he's gambling the well-being of, what, 8 billion people on this planet with perhaps a final—I don't know what you call it in English, because I've never gambled—but a final go at the spinning wheel, or whatever it's called. I don't think it's going to end well for him. If he does that, I don't think it's going to end well for the world. But that's not in our hands.

#Glenn

Now, I also suspect he might try to go all-in before throwing in the towel, if that's even an option. So, yeah, Professor Morandi, thank you so much for your time. And, yes, stay safe over there.

#Seyed M. Marandi

Thank you very much for having me, Glenn.

#Seyed M. Marandi

It's always a great pleasure to be with you and your audience.