

# Iran HITS Qatari Tanker, Downs US F-35 | Patrick Henningsen

Patrick Henningsen discusses Iran's latest enforcement measures over the Strait of Hormuz as it punishes ceasefire violations and rejects Trump's ultimatum. NOTE: At 23:13 I was forced to clip out the segment on Netanyahu's 60 minute interview due to copyright issue. Please see the link here and watch the clip for context into what we talk about afterward: <https://x.com/60Minutes/status/2053615595183014219?s=20> SUPPORT PATRICK'S WORK: [https://www.youtube.com/@UCY\\_sGiAswJNo8HQBOKme01g](https://www.youtube.com/@UCY_sGiAswJNo8HQBOKme01g) <https://patrickhenningsen.substack.com/> PATREON.COM /DANNYHAIPHONG Support the channel in other ways: <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhai...> Substack: [chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com](https://chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com) Cashapp: \$Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: <https://paypal.me/spiritofho> Follow me on Telegram: <https://t.me/dannyhaiphong> #iran #trump #iranwar

## #Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I'm joined by Patrick Henningsen. He is the founder of 21st Century Wire, independent journalist and geopolitical analyst. Patrick, good to see you again.

## #Patrick Henningsen

It's great to be with you, Danny.

## #Danny

Yes. So let us get started with the latest developments in the Iran war. It seems like what's going on now is that Iran and the U.S. are exchanging proposals. But in the interim period, Iran is enforcing what it claims are its legitimate rights over the Strait of Hormuz. We saw overnight, in the last 24 hours, reports from the British media that a Qatari tanker was hit. A cargo ship was hit off Qatar's coast. There are also reports that another Qatari tanker tried to cross the Strait of Hormuz but was denied.

And then there are multiple reports now of multiple F-35 jets that seemingly were heading from Iranian airspace, inducing the squawking 7700 emergency signal over the Gulf of Oman and having to make emergency landings around the Al-Dhafra Air Base in the UAE. None of these reports right now are 100% verified, but nonetheless, we're getting reports like this almost every single day as the continued control over the Strait of Hormuz by Iran remains ongoing, and the United States attempts to starve Iran off with a blockade. But what's your assessment of the situation right now,

Patrick, as we enter, I think, a period where there's a lot of alarm bells rising over the economic situation, the rising cost of oil, and the China-Trump summit that's about to happen? What's your assessment of where things are going and where we are right now?

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Sure. I'll start in sequential order of the issues that you brought up, just one by one. But the first one is that military dimension. And those reports, while it's very difficult to confirm, likewise the reports are claims by the Iranians that they hit two U.S. destroyers and did damage, you know, say any video footage from the nose camera of a drone. It's going to be very difficult to confirm either way. Obviously, the United States is not going to admit any damage to any ship. Full stop. They just simply won't. And then, likewise, the U.S. will claim that they hit Iranian boats or killed Iranian naval sailors and so forth.

And we haven't seen reports in the Iranian media for that, which means the U.S. claim is likely not credible, because if you're martyred in the war against the U.S., your names and images will be all over the country, because it's seen as an honor to be martyred in such a noble conflict repelling the American invaders. So from that point of view, I do lean towards the Iranian reporting rather than the U.S. denials or the U.S. claims. Likewise, with the F-35 reports, this to me could be potentially interesting because, again, what would F-35 jets be doing if not probing radar, using stealth technology to probe radar, doing reconnaissance, potentially involved in a mission of aggression?

And then was that mission thwarted, or did they get painted by a radar system? This has been done in the past. The Israeli, I believe, F-35s were painted by an unknown radar system back during the previous hostilities in June, which spooked the Israelis apparently—reportedly, anyway. So there are all these possibilities. That means that hostilities are afoot. That's what we can say for sure. The question is when. Really, everyone I speak to in Iran around this conversation—all the pundits and experts—there's a sort of consensual agreement that it's not a question of if but when. So when would be the opportune time?

So we can talk about the political dimension there—certainly the upcoming meeting with Xi Jinping and Trump. That's something I'll talk about in a moment. So from that point of view, yes, both Iran and the U.S., and Israel for that matter, have benefited from this pause effectively. There have been hostilities. There is sparring. Definitely the U.S. is testing the limits on everything—naval, air, militarily—and gathering intelligence. Likewise, the Iranians are making adjustments to probably everything. And, you know, the thing is, you can decimate or you can wipe out a significant amount of Iranian military hardware or sites that you've bombed, that you've destroyed, and so forth.

But because they're in a defensive position, they do have the benefit of being able to make adjustments, whereas their situation hasn't materially changed that much—the Iranians. We're told with recent reports now that they haven't lost anything—70% or 80% of their missile capability. In fact, it's the opposite. They've retained 70%. Likewise, with claims by the U.S. of eliminating their

drone arsenal, those U.S. claims seem to be not credible. In fact, it's the opposite, and I'm sure Russia is doing quite a bit of work in helping support or backstop some of the Iranian efforts because they do have a trade relationship on the military level, especially with the drones.

They have done for many years, so let's not be naive to think they wouldn't be. So Iran is preparing for a war. They're preparing for the resumption of hostilities. But the U.S.'s platform for attack is not as good as it was on February 27th. They've forfeited, if not most, then all of their bases in the region, save for a couple of holdouts. Kuwait seems to be confused as to what to do and is wondering if they're just going to be a sitting target should they provide a staging area. And we saw, I think, the reports last week that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were denying the U.S. use of their airspace.

I think those are credible reports. I think those were precise. I didn't see any denials from the U.S. side regarding that, so those were credible. I saw a report floated afterwards, just 24 hours afterwards, claiming that they flip-flopped on that—the Saudis and the Kuwaitis reversed on that, that no, they're going to allow the U.S. to have access to the airspace. So that has a probability of being a planted story in order to rescue U.S. PR, which wouldn't be unusual, that type of a follow-up story. So we're into the realm of propaganda and smoke and mirrors here. So bottom line is both sides are preparing for a resumption of hostilities. The question is which side has the better hand. And Iran has a much stronger strategic hand now than they did before February 28th.

That's beyond debate. Strategically, Iran has a stronger hand. They have more allies. They've won over the world media. The U.S. has depleted a lot of its arsenal. They don't have enough for a long attack—a couple of weeks max, I would say. Israel is probably in a similar boat, so they need to deal this incredible hammer blow to the Iranians in order to somehow square this equation that they've been telling us—that they're going to be able to dismantle the regime, take out their infrastructure, et cetera. They've raised the expectations on that on the U.S. side to such a level. And so has Israel Katz, by the way, the Israeli defense minister. He's talking about annihilation during his public statements as well. But can they actually deliver this?

And will Iran be able to withstand this? Another serious blow like this by the Americans and the Israelis, and all indications are that the Israelis and Americans won't be able to deal the level of conventional blow anyway that they did before. So it's not going to be as strong of a blow, and they're not going to be able to decapitate the regime. They're not going to achieve regime change—none of that. So, like, what are they hoping to achieve other than make a big statement, make a big fireworks display, declare victory, and then somehow patch up some kind of a deal with the Straits of Hormuz later afterwards, move things on to a Cuban invasion? Who knows with the Trump administration? So from a military point of view, that's what I see—an effort to conceal defeat, an effort to conceal defeat.

There is no universe where this is going to be classed as a victory by the U.S. It's just not. It's an illegal war of aggression. It's going to go down in the history books as a complete debacle. There is

no victory. I mean, it's just not going to happen. So then there's the political dimension. Political dimension, domestically in the U.S.—need we say any more? Look at the polling. It's bad. It's bad for Trump. How about internationally? Is he doing any better in the international court of public opinion? Trump, the U.S.—I don't think so. They're doing bad on the international front. So politically, it's a big failure both domestically and internationally. That's not going to help the military effort either. Okay, so let's look at—how about Israel's public opinion in America? Is that doing any better recently? Not looking good. In fact, all-time low.

Trump's at an all-time low. Israel's at an all-time low. Benjamin Netanyahu is having to do rescue 60 Minutes interviews to try to sort of patch up the PR on this. It's not—a very weak interview that he gave, very sort of—and slightly trepidatious on his part. You can tell his brand, his effort is sinking rapidly. So that's not looking good. Geopolitically, how's the U.S. doing here? Are they doing good? Are they better than they were before February 28th? I would say not. Iran's got full control or operational control of the Strait of Hormuz. The U.S. can't be policing a blockade for very much longer with their naval resources. And plus, it's not really a blockade. It's slightly porous. And Iran still manages the straits. Okay, so economically, how's that looking in the U.S.?

Good? Bad? Worse than before? Much worse. How about internationally? Much worse. Okay. So on every single metric, every single dimension of this situation, it's bad. It's worse for the U.S. and Israel. They have sunk to incredible depths in the last 70 days. There's no other way to put this. So they're really in the hole, and they're expecting a Hail Mary is going to pull them out of this. To me, it's cut your losses. That would be the best option—to somehow cut your losses, put a spin on it, just do something, maybe another moon mission or something. Who knows? But they can't rescue this one. But are they going to rescue it? Probably. They're probably going to go for it, Danny. That's the thing. That's what I think—that they're going to have a crack at it.

And it's going to be any time from today until the next, I don't know, the end of May? When is the next bank holiday? I don't know. It's like Memorial Day, right? Think of the markets. Think of the markets, right? So, I mean, yeah. So the China thing is interesting. I don't know if you want to talk about that, but a lot of people, Danny, are wondering whether he's waiting for the meeting with Xi Jinping in order to press the button on this, because he couldn't do it before. Otherwise, that's going to be a very uncomfortable meeting, and they've already delayed this meeting. This was supposed to happen in March. So that, to me, the China thing is an interesting piece, and I think that's potentially a consequential piece in all this.

## **#Danny**

Oh, definitely. It's highly likely that if the United States strikes Iran and there's a resumption of active hostilities, that, of course, would not last a day or a week. I mean, they're even talking about two weeks. I think there was this emergency phone call that Trump had with Netanyahu, and Netanyahu said, "We'll do this for two weeks." The problem is that if they start now, that goes right into this two-and-a-half-day visit that Trump is set to do beginning in about three days. So that's not

really going to work, because that meeting will almost inevitably be canceled, because, one, China does not want to be, for all kinds of reasons, meeting with a head of state that is actively at war.

And the Trump administration would likely feel compelled to stay in that situation room and watch the fireworks for as long as they can. Seems that's what happened last time. But also, you know, you talked about how the U.S.'s hand is right now in all of this, and you mentioned all these points about how badly it's going on all fronts. Now it's kind of coming out from everywhere. This isn't just you, Patrick, that's saying this, but now there's a Pentagon briefing. Senator Mark Kelly, in this Pentagon briefing, said that he saw that the Pentagon's munitions stockpiles were seriously depleted. And it's fair to say it's shocking how deep we've gone into the reserves. And this is no dove.

He's a Democrat, but he is no dove. He's a hawk, a neocon hawk. So these admissions we should take seriously, I think. And then, I don't know if you saw, Patrick, Robert Kagan, the arch-neocon. I mean, he may be the neocon, the founder of 21st-century neoconservative warmongering. The Project for the New American Century talking about checkmate in Iran, but not for the United States, but for Iran. Washington can't reverse or control the consequences of its losing war. And he makes it explicitly clear, Patrick, that unless the U.S. is prepared to invade Iran, to undergo regime change, and hold on to political power inside of Iran, then if the answer is no to all of those things, you can't do that, then this war is effectively lost. But your thoughts on this?

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Robert Kagan, that's Mr. Victoria Nuland to you. Yes, I forgot that one — Mr. Victoria Nuland. Yeah, you lost the neocons and you lost Kagan. I mean, that's like a white flag right there from the war party. So that's pretty extraordinary. But just to reverse a little bit — I'll come back to that in a moment — but just to reverse on the China thing. So the meeting of the 13th to the 15th — this is a two-day state visit to China, very unusual. This is going to include working lunches and stuff like that. So this is coming a week after Abbas Araghchi was in Beijing meeting with the Chinese. So Trump's coming after the Iranians, so the Iranians are getting pole position.

What do you think the conversation with Iran is like versus the conversation that they're going to have with Trump? Trump thought he was going to go in there with a load of leverage. They're sanctioning Chinese refineries, the teapot refineries that are processing Iranian oil. Scott Bessent, Trump's George Soros banker attack dog, going hot and heavy on the Chinese on this. So they're clearly trying to load up pressure on China. I think that was the old plan, and they tried this with the tariff wars. You know, their tariffs got up to 145% on Chinese goods, and then China basically countered with restrictions on the export of rare earth minerals, which the United States military needs desperately, as well as other industries.

So they tried this kind of art-of-the-deal pressure leverage game with China, but now the U.S. has already shown its hand, and too many U.S. politicians have come out openly and said that, well, this

is actually really good, what's happening with the Strait, because China's not getting their oil from Iran. And so they've already telegraphed that they're trying to damage the Chinese economy, and that is just a no-go for China. So I think that Trump is in an extremely weak position going into Beijing, and China is in a position to basically read him the riot act. So if he thinks that they're going to be doing an escalation on Iran after this meeting, or before, or during, with this administration, I wouldn't leave any possibility out that they would do it.

That's something Israel would do, which would be to launch an attack during the meeting to put Trump on the spot. So I would say if I was going to put my fiver each way on a long shot on this, I would put down that Israel will attack Iran during Trump's meeting. And that will force the United States to take a position which they won't be able to back out of. And at the end of the day, Israel doesn't care about U.S.-Chinese relations. They don't care about any of this. They don't care about Trump's approval rating. They don't care about any of that. They've got what they wanted from Trump. Now they just want him to take it over the finish line by hook or by crook. So that's really interesting. So Trump can't—I think the plan, Danny, was that he would ask China to help open the Straits. Yes.

That would have been—but I think that's off the table right now. That would have been sort of a thing a month ago while this was a fresh crisis. But now you've seen all the games the U.S. has played, and they're not even willing to talk and do any real diplomacy. This whole grift is getting long in the tooth for the Chinese and the Russians. This idea that we don't do diplomacy—Trump puts this memorandum of understanding with a 24-hour deadline to the Iranians, and Iran's response is, "Go pound sand." I mean, they're just so defiant in their response. And I'm like, they don't even respect the United States anymore. So who has the leverage right now? The U.S. is acting desperate. They begged for a ceasefire on April 8th.

That didn't come from Tehran. That came from Washington. Okay, they begged the Israelis, and the Americans were desperate for a ceasefire on April 8th. So if Trump holds all the cards, like Rubio and Trump keep saying in all these press opportunities, then why did you beg for a ceasefire on April 8th? Clearly, you needed it. You're running out. Israel's running out. The U.S. is running out. They need to pause to rearm and reload and sort of recalibrate for their next move. Iran could have kept going. They weren't asking for a ceasefire. So that's kind of obvious where things are in terms of the power dynamics on this. So I think that, you know, there's no more pressure that they can put on China on this.

China's already actually pulled their card, which is that they activated a piece of legislation in China that says that they will not abide by or recognize these U.S. sanctions. And they're giving a lifeline to any other countries that will be supported by China legally and politically if they don't abide by the U.S. sanctions as well, against China's refineries or anything to do with Iran, it looks like. So China's already stepped out. This is bad news for Trump to be stepping into Beijing at this time, and it just—

this is really, for a U.S. president, to go down with such low footing. I've hardly ever seen this before, for a state visit with an American president to go in on such weak footing—on your back heels, actually.

Trump's going in on his back heels. How's he going to react? What's he going to do to sort of spin this one around in his favor? I don't really see—he's not got any room to maneuver at all. The U.S. has painted itself into such a terrible position with this. They could stay, they could go, they could linger. All three of those are bad for the U.S. So it's like \*WarGames\*—you remember the film with Matthew Broderick? Best way to win is not to play. And looking back, that would have been taking the advice of all the U.S. generals and military war games, and here we go, all the way back to the Millennium Challenge in 2002. Don't do it.

## **#Danny**

Yeah, yeah. And yeah, Donald Trump going to China, too, with this set of cards, which are either non-existent or incredibly poor, means that if he does try to dictate terms, we know that China is going to say no, especially with the Strait of Hormuz. There's going to be no budging on that because China doesn't do that sort of thing. China does not do that—any kind of strong-arming or using negotiations or military might to strong-arm other countries. It doesn't do that. So it would never do that regardless of the circumstances. But to do it now, to try to demand that now and then to have them say no, well, that's only going to cause even more chaos in the markets, because the longer this goes on, the more that the Trump administration tries to exercise options that don't actually exist, the less faith that these parasitic oil monopolies and financiers at the helm of Wall Street have—they become a lot more jittery.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

He's not looking good.

## **#Danny**

No, he looks like he's dying.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

He looks like he's on death's door. That's brown bread sort of territory there. Not good. That's the first thing I noticed. But notice also that 60 Minutes, if I'm not mistaken, that's under the aegis of CBS, the Chabad Broadcasting System. So when was that thing filmed? That would be an interesting question. How recently was that—kept on ice for days or weeks? Who knows? But it just seemed like the timing of that—what's the purpose of the release of that? Is it they felt they had to release that for a reason? He's talking about Bari Weiss and Mossad running basically the news desk at CBS now. So that's an interesting question. He's very weak, so he's very reticent there to condemn China. So

that speaks probably to China's weight and power in the international system, which is undeniable. And China's not reactive, as you said, Danny.

They're not reactive. They have their positions, long-term positions, staked already. They don't panic. They don't flail their hands and say stupid things like the United States does every day and like the Israelis do constantly as well. So that's extremely interesting. But the thing that I just can't get around is the decrepit state of Netanyahu in that. To me, that is the indelible mark of that interview as far as I'm concerned. He didn't really say much about anything, and he kept couching it in these secretive terms like, "I can't say, I know, but I can't say." He said that with a bunch of other things as well during that interview. So that, to me, is typical Netanyahuchutzpah. And he is like one of the greatest liars ever. And as my colleague remarked earlier today, he's not very good at it, but it's good enough for the American audience.

He's such a bad liar, but it works because he just hams it up, and people should get used to sort of listening to him and allowing that guy to hold court. But he doesn't look like he's particularly confident there. I think we can all just accept the fact that the numbers don't look good for Israel in terms of interceptor missiles. Hezbollah just took out one of their Iron Dome batteries with a \$1,000 FPV drone. Yeah, that just happened in the last couple of days. So that's not good. A couple more of those Iron Dome batteries get taken out, and now Israel's naked on multiple fronts. I mean, this is not looking good. Just think about this, Danny. The last time they sparred, from February 28th, did Hezbollah join in on the party? No, they didn't. But is Hezbollah going to join in on the party here?

Yeah, you better believe it. So Israel's fighting a two-front war, and they're trying really hard to separate Lebanon from Iran in any negotiations. Trying really hard. And Iran's been very sort of insistent that the Lebanese situation is not separate from this situation and that they want that to be part of any peace deal or any ceasefire. It's a very smart move by the Iranians, negotiations-wise, because they know that Iran values the human life of the Lebanese and the Palestinians, and Israel will use that as a threat implicitly. And the Iranians know how devious the Israelis are in this way.

So that's why they're getting out in front of it. And just the fact that Iran has done that in negotiations shows me you are dealing with a formidable international actor right there. You can only do moves like that if you can back it up. And that's the type of thing Russia could pull — a move like that in negotiations, pull in another dimension into there, and credibly the other side has to acknowledge it. Iran's just done that and done it very, very credibly, and they're able to back it up. That, to me, means we're looking at a new region now. We're looking at the Middle East or West Asia, whichever you refer to it. The rules are changed.

The fact that Iran insisted, in the last round, that Lebanon be part of the negotiations, the ceasefire, that's the beginning of the change in the security architecture of the region. The second point that is the beginning of the change in the security architecture is Saudi Arabia and Kuwait last week denying U.S. use of airspace for an attack on Iran. Now, people will deny and say, oh, we don't know if that happened or not. I think it's a credible report. I've not seen any official denials about

that from anybody, so that seems to be credible. That is the beginning as well, another block in the new security architecture. The inevitable security architecture of the Persian Gulf—inevitable, because it's already begun.

It's already begun. So we're looking at a gradual process, Danny, that's taking place right in front of our eyes. History is changing right in front of our eyes. It's going to be a gradual, messy, potentially bloody process by the end of it. I hope not, but it's already begun. Those are just undeniable changes in the laws of physics in the Persian Gulf. And it means that the United States no longer has any position in the region. Otherwise, that could never have happened. The U.S. is in a weak position. So back to the other, when we talk about the military dimension of this, that is undeniably a military defeat for the U.S.—not in the sense of the damage that they've inflicted on Iran. We can acknowledge that.

But from an imperial perspective, if empire is about controlling regions and having leverage within regions and being able to stage military operations as a credible threat to have escalation dominance in the Middle East or in West Asia and the Persian Gulf, then the U.S. has lost that. That's a resounding rout, a total defeat of the U.S.—a total defeat from the imperial perspective. Okay, not one-on-one with Iran. I'm talking about the region. And it was only because of that that now you have the other actors in the region acting as a deterrent against the United States. Wow, this is amazing. So from that point of view, I think we're watching history unfold gradually, painfully, not pretty, but it's happening.

## **#Danny**

I think that's a great point. And Israel has, as you said, Israel will use these developments as much as it can to sound the alarm, raise the threat levels, to try to justify continuing this war. But Israel's Channel 14 has said—or is it Channel 12, I don't know which one of these mouthpieces of the Israeli regime it is—but they have been sounding the alarm about exactly the point you made about Iran and putting forth and being firm on this being a regional war, and that regional peace needs to happen. So Israel is saying that Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine, and Gaza are all on the table when it comes to Iran's position—that they're not. That they are putting forth to the United States that all of these fronts have to be resolved if there's going to be any lasting cessation of hostilities, which, as you said, can only be done, and you can only hold on to such positions at the negotiating table if you are quite confident in your position.

And then one last point I'll make before I get to this, to segue a bit into Trump and his reaction to the Iranian proposals, is that a lot of people critique China for having a relationship with Israel economically. But I've heard many say to me, even people in China, who say to me, "Hey, you know, if we didn't have this relationship with Israel, it would be much more difficult to have a relationship with Iran like we do, and without Israeli interference." Because Netanyahu—what you saw there, as you said, it's an acknowledgment of China's weight. It's also an acknowledgment that Israel thinks once, twice, maybe thrice about doing anything to China, regardless of its assistance to

Iran. And we know that China's assistance to Iran is well beyond little components to missiles and drones.

It goes both militarily and economically far, far, far more than that. So that's just one point I'll make. You don't have to like it. It could be morally, you could say, I don't agree with that. But at the end of the day, I think there's some reality here that does bear fruit and bear weight. But Donald Trump is losing it, you know, around these proposals that Iran has put forth, including the most recent one. Donald Trump was on Truth Social twice in one day on Mother's Day to just absolutely throw a temper tantrum about Iran's response. He said, I read the response from Iran's so-called representatives. I don't like it. Totally unacceptable. Thank you for your attention to this matter. And then before this, he talked about how Iran was playing games—delay, delay, delay.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

They think they can laugh, but they won't be laughing much longer.

## **#Danny**

But he's about to go to China, which is very serious about diplomacy and negotiations in good faith. And this is how the United States and Donald Trump are behaving, Patrick. What do you make of this, especially on the negotiations front when it comes to Iran and the United States, if we can call it that?

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Any tweet, any statement made by this White House regarding negotiations with Iran is not credible because you don't know who—Trump's not talking to them directly. We know that. So Trump is relying on his interlocutors, his diplomats, his envoys, or whatever. They're supposedly talking to somebody, or they're talking to the Pakistanis who are then talking to somebody, but we don't know the chain of custody of that conversation. That's the problem with this administration, this ad hoc sort of pseudo-diplomacy that Trump is trying to pass off as negotiations internationally, because nothing's consistent.

The Iranians are not acknowledging anything coming out of the U.S. The only acknowledgment I think that's credible is that Iran acknowledged they received a one-page memorandum of understanding of some terms of a deal, to which they replied, you know, this is not going to work at all, this is ridiculous, and they issued their sort of counterproposal, which I'm sure the Iranians are fully well aware the U.S.—Trump's never going to, or the Israeli lobby is never going to allow any of the Iranian conditions, which are that you're going to have to lift sanctions, you're going to have to pay reparations, you're going to have to unfreeze our assets.

Those are all no-go areas. We're going to reserve the right to enrich a certain amount of uranium. They're not going to get any of these things. There's going to be no curtailing of the missile program, none of that. So there's no way, just on the sanctions alone and the frozen assets alone, it's ever going to be allowed to happen in the U.S. So Iran knows that. So this goes back to my original point, which I made probably during our previous discussion last week, that Iran has shifted into this kind of, you know, third gear with the U.S. It's the same third gear Russia runs in with the U.S. They're just managing the U.S. because they know the U.S. is not capable of doing anything diplomatically.

The U.S. is not capable of doing any deals at all because they just don't have the capability, the framework, the personnel, the knowledge, the intellectual ability to put together any kind of interim accord which would lead to a treaty. They just can't. So they're just playing diplomacy and getting on with what they need to get on with while the U.S. continues to hamstring itself by over-promising and under-delivering diplomacy, which is what they've done with Ukraine. And Russia's just playing them like a fiddle. They send a babysitter, Kirill Dmitriev. He's not an official Russian diplomat. He's just there as a babysitter to keep Witkoff and Kushner busy so that Trump and the U.S. can say that they're doing diplomacy when Russia knows it's not serious diplomacy. Nothing's going to happen.

But they'll keep the door open, but they'll just babysit them. Now, Iran is basically, although they don't have a babysitter assigned to the U.S. team, they're going to manage it exactly like the Russians, which is that the Trump administration is not a serious presidency. That's the problem. It's not a real – they don't have a real foreign service. They don't – effectively, it's a surrogate of Israel. And Israel has selected all of the cabinet members for Trump, and they've selected them on their incompetence and their inability to do anything other than toe the Israeli line, pretty much. And they're all compromised individuals, pretty much to a man and a woman. And so they don't care.

So Iran's already priced all this in now. The window of opportunity, while we say it's likely that the U.S. is going to resume hostilities, Israel would like them to resume hostilities, but the longer they let this thing roll, the more difficult it's going to be politically at home for Trump and abroad, as we can see with the China situation. There are too many factors at play that you can't micro... Trump believes he can micromanage everything and that the world is a constellation of transactions. And all you have to do is just turn the knob in each place the right way, and you get this magical equation where you can build your casino in Atlantic City.

All the stars align with the Teamsters, the mafia, the bent contractors, people that you plan to rip off and not pay, city and regional planners that you're going to bribe, you're going to blackmail the mayor. And if you just line all that up, you're going to get the deal. Like, that's the world Trump lives in, in his brain. That's how he organizes things. The reality in international relations is totally different. You're dealing with forces of nature. And at some point, those forces of nature overtake all of your micromanaging machinations. And that's the part, that's why Trump has fallen on his face with Ukraine. Where's the Board of Peace?

## **#Danny**

Where's the Board of Peace? What happened to it?

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Nowhere. He's going to fall on his face with Cuba as well, I predict. That one is going to blow up in his face. That is going to be probably the death knell of this administration if they haven't reached that point already. I think that Cuba is just going to be a disaster for the U.S., for the country, and for the government, for Rubio and everybody. I sort of have, in a sort of really twisted way, want to see it happen. But I don't want to see it happen because I don't want any Cubans to lose their lives at the altar of this just disgusting megalomania that we're witnessing now. So, yeah, I mean, that's my positive spin on things.

## **#Danny**

No, I have a similar sentiment, especially with regards to Cuba. It could be the, you know, Richard Wolff said Iran could be the proverbial straw that broke the U.S. empire's back. I could see Cuba being the straw that breaks the illusion, the back of this illusion. That because the United States gained at least a diplomatic and economic foothold on Venezuela, that that suddenly means that it has this kind of permanent control over Latin America. Cuba could change that really quickly should it go badly. And as you said, I believe this is true. It will go badly. It will not be some Delta operation that leads to Díaz-Canel's capture, and then Cuba suddenly is just doing what he wants to do. Let me say this.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Danny, what do you think the global court of public opinion is going to be if they go for Cuba aggressively? I mean, I just see Cuba's brand rising like a star internationally. The amount of support they're going to get from the world community is just unthinkable. Look at Iran's brand internationally. I mean, they're in an incredible position internationally, politically, to the point where I'm seeing people that used to just deride them are now speaking of them with almost reverent tones after the last two months. Why? Because they've stood toe-to-toe with America, and they've got the respect. And they're credible. The Iranians have done what they said they were going to do, and they've meant it, and they've delivered.

And there's not many countries that can do that against the United States. There's no European countries that have the balls to stand up to Washington. I mean, all the vassal states in Europe, some of which have a GDP that's comparable to a world superpower, they still don't have the balls to stand up to Washington, even if Washington blows up their pipelines right in front of them, you

know, uses NATO assets to destroy their energy infrastructure in Europe. And, you know, the likes of Germany and, you know, the rest of them would just twiddle their thumbs and say, oh, yes, sir, no, sir, three bags full, sir. It's embarrassing.

And Iran's just basically turned around and said, no one's coming to help us. No one's coming to help us. We're on our own. And we're going to stand toe to toe with not just America, but with Israel as well. And so the results are pretty obvious for everybody to see now. It's very safe for China and Russia to come in and support Iran even more because there's no question. I mean, I would not back any country, and I think Russia is probably in this mind because of the collapse of Syria, which isn't the Syrian government's fault under Assad. I mean, they're under the most vicious, punitive sanctions imaginable in history. They strangled that country to death.

But Russia still couldn't fight the war for Syria. They couldn't fight their war for them. Iran can fight their war for themselves. So it's a much better investment for Russia or China or any other country to come in and back Iran right now. Because you know you're going to get – they're not going to fold up and collapse. So that's a good investment straight off the bat. That also changes the regional dynamic considerably. And the Gulf states are looking – they were the sort of flavor of the month a few years ago. They're looking incredibly weak, confused, and a little bit trepidatious about their position in the region right now.

## **#Danny**

Super divided, too, and super divided amongst each other. I think we're seeing that with the whole Project Freedom thing, those media reports. I think Saudi Arabia and Kuwait even rejected the reversal media reports. They said, no, we didn't reverse on Project Freedom, like, you know, not participating. We didn't say we're going to participate now. No. And we see the results. It hasn't happened. So, uh, and of course the UAE stands completely in contradiction to all of this. They're going full steam ahead, in part because they do have this, uh, you know, rivalry with Saudi Arabia in many respects. And it's, it's looking pretty ugly. Um,

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

And Qatar and Saudi Arabia, they're not on the same page on a lot of stuff. They're rivals, effectively. And Bahrain is just drifting out there. They're now instituting police state crackdowns on Shiites, who are the majority of the population in Bahrain. So, I mean, they're just doubling down on a bad position already. And so there's no chance that the U.S. is going to be able to reestablish a footprint there. So, yeah, it is a very divided GCC, extremely divided. Jordan, as well, is hugely compromised. The royal family there is basically on tenterhooks right now and seen as Zionist puppets by pretty much the whole of the Arab world. So not looking good, not looking good. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

## **#Danny**

I mean, and just a quick note on Cuba before I want to maybe close on a little bit more on this Kagan piece. But when it comes to Cuba, I mean, with Iran, what a lot of Iranian commentators and analysts, you know, from Mohammad Marandi to, you know, Setareh Sadeghi, a lot, many people have said one of the big changes that has occurred in Iran is that young people who may have had issues with the government, maybe suffering from lack of prospects because of sanctions, have been made incredibly more militant, if not 100% supportive of the government and of sovereignty, because of what the United States and Israel have done from the June war, 12-day war, till now, to the February 28th escalation.

These two developments have brought incredible unity to Iran. Cuba — I was in Cuba 10 years ago, and this is what I was hearing: that one of the big concerns was how does the next generation continue on the Cuban Revolution, that there had been inroads made by USAID and various other platforms to try to bring Cuban youth on the side of the U.S. and the West, and maybe therefore be more willing to destabilize the government. If the U.S. does anything militarily in Cuba, I can guarantee that all of that work that they've spent millions upon millions, maybe billions of dollars doing over the last several decades, that that work is going to go up in smoke.

And you will see unprecedented unity, which will then... Cuba... especially in the hemisphere, despite all of the anti-Cuban propaganda and all of this. Iran was coming from a far worse position in public opinion, not only in the United States but regionally, than Cuba is. Cuba is thought of a little more warmly even by countries that, you know, are not necessarily friendly, but they might become a little more friendly if they see the United States trying to destabilize the region in order to overthrow Cuba. So it's a dicey and risky maneuver that, I don't know, it will be close to midterms by the time they get around to it. So I guess we'll have to wait.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

The other thing to add is, if the U.S. goes in aggressively on Cuba and does what they say they're planning, what Rubio's hinting at and so forth, they could lose Venezuela. And that's a tenuous foothold the U.S. has in Venezuela. I'm sorry. And they would lose it completely. And the moral authority would be on Venezuelans that are taking the side of Cuba. And so that would be a call for an ousting of the U.S. out of Venezuela, and they would never be able to come back after that. That would be it. So they will lose Venezuela. I'm 100% sure.

And Mexico, it will embolden Xiomara and more sort of Global South-leaning political forces and socialist forces in Mexico as well. So there's no win for the U.S. there. There's a little win for Rubio. He gets to puff his chest out and do his conquistador dance. The Viceroy Rubio, Viceroy of Cuba. I like the sound of it, Viceroy of Cuba, Marco Rubio. It's better than he's going to get. He's not going to get U.S. president in 2028, so he might as well settle for Viceroy of Cuba. He's not even going to get that. So he's going to have to take, like, some other—maybe they can go for Grenada again. That's probably going to be easier, right? Grenada. All right.

## **#Danny**

One of our friends over at DD Geopolitics messaged me the term DJ Gusano for Marco Rubio because recently I think he was DJing some wedding, some family member's wedding or something. He was DJing.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

What's his DJ name? Is he Lil Marco? Lil Marco.

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Well, he calls the editor of our DD Geopolitics DJ Gusano, which is hilarious. I think that's a really great name.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

What a cheeseball.

## **#Danny**

But yeah, well, you know, in the last 10 minutes or so, Patrick, I just wanted to pull up this quote from Robert Kagan that I think summarizes maybe where things really are at in terms of—let me just try to find it because I accidentally closed it—so here we go. He says, any resolution other than America's effective surrender holds enormous risks that Trump has not so far been willing to take. Those who glibly call on Trump to finish the job rarely acknowledge the costs, unless the U.S. is prepared to engage in a full-scale ground and naval war to remove the current Iranian regime.

## **#Danny**

And then to occupy Iran until the new government can take hold, unless it is prepared to risk the loss of warships convoying tankers through a contested strait, unless it is prepared to accept the devastating long-term damage to the region's productive capacities likely to result from Iranian retaliation. Walking away now could seem like the least bad option. As a political matter, Trump may feel—well, feel he has a better chance of riding out defeat than of surviving a much longer, larger, and more expensive war that could end in failure. I mean, this is Robert Kagan, this is the architect of Iraq, against the entirety of the U.S. imperial West Asia, Middle East policy, talking like this. Which, I mean, these are the same people who helped Rumsfeld come up with the big list of the seven countries in five years. And this is where we're at.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

Danny, that is a masterful piece of writing. Honestly, my jaw's on the floor. It's so good. I could not have delivered a better assessment—so concise, so well-refined—as Robert Kagan has done there. So there was talent there all along, right? There was talent. There was some talent in there. But what does that show you? That shows you the best laid plans of mice and men. Best laid plans of mice and men. They were talking about conquest against Iran for years, including Kagan and Bolton and all the other neocons. Best laid plans of mice and men, as Robert Burns, the Scottish poet, famously said. And now we've come to the reality of the situation, and it doesn't look as good as it did 20 years ago, or in the sort of war planning rooms, or in the mind-deep excess. It's not looking good right now.

And so what they're coming to realize—and the Zionists are—I'm assuming Kagan is a Zionist, although I'm not going to take that for granted at the moment anymore. A lot of questions up in the air. But even they're seeing the existential threat to Israel is very palpable. The continuation down this road, many believe, has been a disaster for Israel. And I'm not talking about the military defeat of Israel or the fact that they've laid waste to Tel Aviv and half the military installations in Israel and weakened its position regionally. I'm talking about the global court of public opinion against Israel and the wide acknowledgment in the United States and internationally that Israel dragged the United States into this war, and it was based on fake intelligence, false claims, and a real sales job by Netanyahu with a completely gullible and cognitively challenged Donald Trump, surrounded by a gaggle of charlatans.

It's just a perfect storm, really, for a disaster. So I'm reading that, and it sounds like Kagan, in that passage, is also kind of—he's not leaving the door open, but he's saying, if you fulfill these criteria, it is possible that you could get a win. So he's like half opening the door there about, you know, boots on the ground, for instance, and some other contingencies that might kind of make this equation add up and work. And I'm thinking to myself, in the back of my mind, I'm thinking, go for it. Go for it. I'm almost like, at this point, put the empire out of its misery, Danny. Go for it. Put those boots on the ground. Go for it. Put your 120,000 combat-ready troops.

That's all the U.S. has, by the way. They've got 120,000 combat-ready troops. They've got plenty of logistical staff, plenty of down-line people performing various duties within the military structure. But in terms of infantry, combat-ready, you've got about 120,000. Go ahead. Get them all out. Put them on the ground in Iran. Let's see what happens. Roll the dice, Donald. Let's see what happens. And guess what? All those military ships that will be loitering around the Strait of Hormuz—they're not real targets now, but they will be. When the fireworks begin, those become very much real targets, and you will incur significant naval losses. Because that's all they've got left.

The U.S. is totally reliant on naval assets because all of their ground bases are pretty much shot to bits. So again, it's what we said at the beginning of this conversation, Danny, is I'm looking at the scorecard prior to February 28th in terms of what the U.S. has on its side and their power rankings, in terms of their ability to do what they need to do in the region militarily to keep their position. And I'm looking at it now, and it's a bad-looking scorecard now. It's like less than half of where it was

prior to February 28th, not to mention they're out of ammo. Like, what are you guys actually going to do here? The only option is to walk away. And I think he summed that up. Kagan did it very eloquently. Managing defeat is a much better option for Trump. I fully agree.

But, you know, some of us are thinking, go for it, Donald. Go for it. You think you can do it? Bibi wants you to do it. Go for it. Go all in. Let's see what happens. Let's see how that ends up. That'll be the most rapid collapse of the U.S. empire. That'll be fast-tracking the whole process of collapse. If they pull the trigger on that—and there are people in the U.S., the Jack Keanes of the world, the Lindsey Grahams of the world—they want Trump to pull that trigger now. They wanted to pull it before Memorial Day weekend. Coming up, coming up to a theater near you, premiering on Memorial Day. They want that. They're on the media right now doing a full-court blitz. They want this war. Levin and everybody else, all these Israeli surrogates in the U.S. media, they're saying, we can't leave Israel hanging out to dry on this, Donald.

You've got to finish the job. You've got to finish the job. Is Trump going to capitulate to all these magpies and hyenas that are just screeching around Washington, around him right now? Or is he going to listen to Joe Kent and some of these other people, the more level-headed and critical thinkers, rational thinkers? Are there any rational thinkers in the U.S. administration? Can we name any? There might be one or two on the Joint Chiefs Committee, maybe within the cabinet. I'm not sure. Like, so it's, I don't know. I don't know. What's going to happen? I don't know. I'd like to say that they're going to do the right thing and the smart thing and the sane thing, but that's assuming there are smart and sane people in the administration. Yeah, yeah, my pen just broke here, that's what that sound was.

## **#Danny**

Those odds of 130,000 maximum combat-ready troops to Iran's million plus—don't like those odds at all. And that's not even taking into consideration everything that Iran says, and likely now that we have demonstrative proof from February 28th into those, what, five or so weeks, that they have a significant capacity outside of just their ground forces protecting their borders. They can do far more than just that. So, don't like those odds. That's a very dangerous game.

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

What is a cornered rat? Israel is a cornered rat in all of this. What are they going to do out of desperation? Are they going to accept Trump doing nothing, withdrawing? How's that going to play with Netanyahu's camp, with the lobby? What are they going to do? What are they going to do? Are they going to make threats against Trump? I mean, what can they do at that point? I think you're going to see a level of hysteria and desperation. You're already seeing it. Look at the statements and the tantrums from some of these people in the U.S. media right now. Levin and the rest of these guys, they're going crazy right now.

They're beside themselves because nothing's happening. And every day nothing happens, Iran gets stronger, and its allies get more emboldened, and the U.S. gets weaker. And there's just no changing that. That's just something that's just... there's nothing you can do about that. So they think that there's some action they can take, some definitive action that's going to turn this around, that's going to change this trend. And I'm saying that it's not. Even if they take action, even if they fight and drop everything they have for two weeks, it's not going to change the arc of these trends. So we'll see.

## **#Danny**

I think that's a great place to end it, Patrick. Without further ado, I want to make sure people know that they can support your work at 21st Century Wire, both on Substack and on the YouTube channel for 21st Century Wire. Both of them are in the video description. Anything you want to say, Patrick, before we head out of here?

## **#Patrick Henningsen**

No, just, yeah, thank you very much. Appreciate the conversation today, Danny. And all shall be revealed before Memorial Day. Or not.

## **#Danny**

Yeah. Or not. I have a feeling we'll be talking again in the not-too-distant future. So support Patrick's work in the video description below. You can also support this channel in the video description below through various means—Substack, Patreon, et cetera. Hit the like button though. That's the best free way to make sure that Patrick's voice and this conversation continue to be spread, so more people can check out those links in the video description too, but also just more people can check out his work. Thanks to all the viewers today, all the moderators. And I put up the new members' super chat as well. So thanks so much. I'll be back tomorrow with our friend Larry Johnson, I believe at 2 p.m. Eastern, a little bit later, May 12th. All right. So see you then. And until next time, bye-bye.