

Scott Ritter: Iran Didn't Break. It Adapted, Now Stronger Than Ever

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Wednesday, May 13th, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Scott Ritter, is here with us. Welcome, Max.

#Scott

Thanks for having me.

#Nima

I want to start, Scott, with Donald Trump's visit to China. But before getting there, we may start with Benjamin Netanyahu's latest interview on 60 Minutes. When he was asked, "How do you see the future of the war in the Middle East?" he said, "We are months away from putting an end to the war." And what does it mean when he says "months away"? And who's going to fight for him? And what is the current situation with the fight in the Middle East?

#Scott

Benjamin Netanyahu telling you you're months away from something. I think you have to be careful because I think for the last 30 years, he's been telling us that we're a few years away or months away from Iran having a nuclear bomb. So apparently his relationship with the calendar is very loose. I don't really give a damn what Benjamin Netanyahu says because he's irrelevant. Nowadays, we're talking about a situation where the United States no longer possesses the capacity to wage meaningful armed conflict against Iran in a conventional manner. You know, President Trump is running up against some very hard realities that he may be dismissive of on the White House lawn when he says, I don't care about the economic cost to the American people. It's about the Iranian nuclear bomb.

Well, there is no Iranian nuclear bomb, but there is a huge economic cost to the American people, which will manifest itself politically to the detriment of the president. And Benjamin Netanyahu needs

to understand, as most Israelis do, that the moment you screw around with the American economy and you're on the wrong side of that equation — as in, you're the one responsible for the downward slide and you're not affiliated with the upward recovery — you're the problem, not the solution. And right now, Israel is very much the problem. Very much the problem. Israel can do nothing without the United States. And right now, we're looking at Israel's support in the United States plummeting. Sixty percent of the American population apparently is not inclined to be favorably supportive of Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu just slightly below 59%.

I think the margin of error might put him over on either. But the point is, no one cares what he says anymore because his words are irrelevant. I mean, yes, Israel is a troublemaker. Yes, Israel will cause trouble. But the idea that Israel is now the driver in the seat — no. And I would also say, you brought up China and now you brought up Israel. You know, you and I, and I think others, understand the role Israel played in fomenting this conflict. It's, you know, Netanyahu and his Mossad director went to the White House on February 11th and sold the president a bill of goods. And there we are. Now we're at war. The president now is holding a bag of crap. I mean, all the honey and roses that were supposed to come out of this conflict — no, it's turned out to be just 100% cat shit. And it smells horrible.

And the president doesn't know what to do. Israel is not the solution. It's the problem now. And Netanyahu is out of the driver's seat. But the other thing people need to realize is that there was a larger agenda at play here than just a greater Israel. Yes, that appeases a certain Zionist element that has seized control of American foreign policymaking and, you know, has heavy influence in the deep state. But Trump is playing a bigger game — a game of global domination. I mean, it's sort of hilarious now to look back on all the lies he told us when he ran for office. Everything he said was a lie. He wasn't seeking to redefine a relationship with the world where the rules-based international order was no longer the driver, that the United States would recognize and believe in a multipolar world.

No, Trump was lying the entire time. He wants to dominate the entire globe. That's his persona. We should have known it. We know who this man is. We know that he's the biggest egomaniac in the world. He can never share anything with anybody. Donald Trump wants to be large and in charge. And what we're seeing with China is that the decapitation of Maduro in Venezuela was supposed to combine with the decapitation of Khamenei in Iran to create a situation where these two nations that were providing oil to China, one of the world's largest economies and a major competitor to the United States — by controlling the flow of energy to China, we were seeking to retard Chinese economic potential and create opportunities for us to, you know, fill the void in the Pacific, especially.

That's what this conflict was about. It was never about Iran's nuclear program at all. That was just the excuse that the president used to sell the war to the American public. And that excuse is wearing very thin right now because, you know, at the end of the day, even though we don't demand evidence leading up to a war, once the war impacts our bottom line, we want evidence. And it appears that there is no evidence that Iran posed a threat. The president has a policy problem, a

narrative problem. But he also has a larger geopolitical problem because the world that he was trying to create has come collapsing in on him. The effort to control the flow of energy to China has failed.

I mean, yes, China is choked off, but he isn't going to China to dictate terms of the Chinese surrender, which was his original intent last month, which is why he had to cancel the trip. He's going to China basically to plead for help, to ask the Chinese, how do we get out of this? We together get out of this mess that we're in. And the Chinese, I think, will remind them that it's a mess you created, but we're here to help. And they'll try and find some way out. But, you know, this isn't about Benjamin Netanyahu in the driver's seat. This is about Donald Trump's failed global vision, Scott Ritter's failed global vision. I mean, we keep talking about, you know, Pete Hegseth said the necessity of Pete Hegseth's role because of the incompetence of this military campaign.

But the incompetence of Scott Ritter is playing out as well. This is a man who has consistently sought to use the energy markets to bring nations to their knees. He specifically said, we're going to bring Russia to its knees. How'd that work, Scott? Not too good, right? Yeah. He wants to bring China to its knees. Not working out too good, is it, Scott? And so the president, I think, is going to put Ritter's head on the chopping block. You know, he's getting just bad advice all around. But anyway, on Netanyahu, he's an aging, sick man who has no meaningful political support in Israel. He's holding on through the fabrication of security threats that have only brought harm to Israel. What problems has he solved?

#Nima

He hasn't solved Hamas.

#Scott

Just ask the IDF how it's going in Lebanon with Hezbollah. You know, we blew up Hezbollah. We killed Nasrallah. We had the pager thing. We're so good. Wait a minute, why are Israeli soldiers dying by the bushel full every day? Oh, because Hezbollah is alive and well and fighting and winning. They haven't solved the Syria problem. That is a very big problem. They have a new problem in the way of Turkey, you know, ascendant. And then Iran was supposed to be decapitated, terminated. It's there, and its support for Hezbollah is growing. The linkage that was thought to have been broken when Syria collapsed has now been, you know, reestablished. And Iran also has a very strong ally with Ansarallah.

In Yemen, it's not just the Strait of Hormuz Iran gets to choke off, but they can shut down the Bab al-Mandeb Strait as well, anytime they want to. So it's not Netanyahu that's in the driver's seat. I think there's a Chinese professor out there talking about Israel wanting to blow the whole world up. I think the guy's smoking dope because, you know, Israel's winning nothing right now. Their military has been exposed as having severe limitations. Air power is supposed to be the trump card for

Israel. Well, the trump card in this conflict has been Iran's ballistic missile program, which apparently neither Israel nor the United States effectively retarded.

The CIA is saying that they got up to 90% back up and running. Arachi, who I believe more than the CIA, is saying it's 120%. Probably that number has gone up because he made that statement last week. What he's saying is, we have reconstituted the totality of our ballistic missile force and we've been building new missiles, so we're stronger today than we were when the conflict actually started. That tells me that Israel and the United States are on the losing end of this equation. The United States is now having a debate internally about what we got left. According to Senator Mark Kelly, we ain't got nothing left.

That's according to the Pentagon classified briefing. Now, people are mad because he's telling the truth. They didn't want the truth to be out because they wanted to lie to the American people and the world and project a sense of strength that doesn't exist. But we don't have sufficient quantities of long-range standoff weapons. We burned through the arsenal. We're now unable to even pretend to think we can go to war with China. A war with Russia is out of the question, and we can't even sustain a meaningful campaign against Iran. If we start it up, we will run out of missiles in Iran. Like I said, 120 percent.

We already proved we can't retard their capacity. They will be able to fire missiles all day long, all week long, all month long until every target they aim at is destroyed. We're out of missile interceptors. Production isn't going to catch up for years, let alone in time to make it meaningful here. So again, I think Israel is finished as the prime driver of what's going on in the Middle East. The prime driver today is Iran. They control the narrative. They control everything. And, you know, they're the ones we should be listening to. You know, 60 Minutes should be calling Arachi. That's the voice they need to listen to. Netanyahu, I spit on him.

#Nima

Scott, when it comes to Lebanon, you just mentioned, and I'm sure you watched those two videos showing the FPV drones hitting Lebanon, you know, Iron Dome batteries. You know, Iron Dome was supposed to hit these drones, but it seems that they're not able to see or hit these FPV drones. What is the problem with Iron Dome? You know, we're not talking about the THAAD system or Patriot system. We're talking about Iron Dome dealing with rockets and drones.

#Scott

Well, Iron Dome was supposed to deal with drones. Iron Dome was created not to shoot down Scud missiles, but to shoot down Katyushas and the homemade rockets that Hamas was firing. Basically, what both Hamas and Hezbollah would do is take these inexpensive, inaccurate rockets and flood the zone, you know, fire at an area and rain down on the ground. And, you know, some of them would hit, most of them wouldn't. But it was terrorism from the standpoint of the Israelis. Iron Dome

was designed to eliminate that threat, to create an affordable means of shooting down these low-cost threats. Now, if you have a drone that flies into the field of view of Iron Dome's target acquisition radars, of course, they can be shot down too.

And if you have, you know, a larger missile come in and dispense multiple warheads that come in, Iron Dome can also, in theory, be effective there. Although I think the intercept rate is too high for the Iron Dome system to handle. You need other missiles to do that. We don't have enough of those. But the FPV is coming in very low to the ground, and it comes in literally under the radar. And once it gets past that radar, I mean, as you see, they have free rein. They're just there. I mean, Hezbollah—I've been following this because I've been following drone warfare for some time now, both in Ukraine and in Russia, the way they fight there, seeing what the United States is doing in terms of adapting to this reality.

And so I watched the early Hezbollah drones with interest because, you know, it takes a while to get used to operating a drone. The patience. It's like anything. Once you get a comfort level, you know, the first time you fly a drone behind enemy lines, you're like, I got to act now. You know, something bad's going to happen, I got to act now. And what you have to cope with as a drone operator is you're going to lose drones because that just happens. The Israelis have taken the Ukrainian model because the FPV drones right now are fiber-optic guided to get through electronic warfare jamming. And so, you know, what the Ukrainians have done for some time now is to stretch the razor wire, barbed wire out, and then just have an automatic motor and it twirls.

And as an FPV drone flies over, the fiber optic cable, of course, you know, lags behind and droops. And as it flies over this wire, it gets caught up in there, it spins it up, and it'll break the wire, and then the drone will crash. So, you know, the Israelis are doing this. So you're going to lose drones. I mean, that's just the way. So the first thing you have to learn as an operator is if you're flying and the drone goes dead, call up another one, start over. You're going to lose drones. So don't treat each drone as a million-dollar piece of equipment that has to deliver on the goods. The other thing is, once you get there, don't panic.

Search out your targets. Prioritize your targets. You're there. The reason you're there is they don't have the ability to shoot you down. Take your time. The early Hezbollah FPV drones were marked by a sense of urgency, and so they would come in and literally dive at the first target they saw, bypassing other targets. What you see now is this maturity. I mean, it's almost as if they're mocking the Israelis. It's, we're here. And it's a trick that the Ukrainians and the Russians play on each other. You know, the sound of the drone has a terrorizing impact.

And if you look at both videos from both sides, when they hear that, you've got the full attention of everybody on the ground. They're now totally focused on trying to shoot this thing down or trying to make sure it doesn't hit them — singular focus. And both sides, I think, get off on that. I mean, I think it's an empowering thing for a drone operator to watch guys on the ground panic because you have a drone flying around that can kill them. Hezbollah today is very mature in their drone

operations. The videos you see right now show patience, maturity, knowledge of the Israeli operations. It's just been fascinating to watch the growth of this happening.

Hezbollah has become a very sophisticated operator of FPV drones, which, as we're seeing, are some of the most impactful weapons on the battlefield today. Because the Israelis, it's the same thing that happens — you know, the Israelis were doing their traditional infantry and armor assaults on fortified Hezbollah positions, and Hezbollah fights back in traditional ambushes. And it's very costly for the Israelis. So the Israelis are pulling back. But there is no safe zone. That's the beauty of the drones. The drones take the battlefield — you know, the force-on-force area, the red zone — and they extend it back. And, you know, I think the Hezbollah FPV drones are operating up to 20 kilometers deep, like in Russia and Ukraine.

You know, they're going 50, 60 kilometers deep in some cases. And if Hezbollah can start projecting FPV drones 60 kilometers into Israel, Israel is going to have a big problem because there will be no safe zone. This is one of the things that's happened in Russia. People say, why are the Russians so slow? Well, gosh, guys, why don't you try fighting in drone warfare? You don't get to drive your logistics up to the front lines, offload, and go into combat anymore. You're offloading 15 kilometers shy, and then the troops have to move in on foot or come in with light vehicles to escape the drone blanket and come in there. You can't mass troops anymore because massing troops invites drone activity.

And so the whole war has been broken down into little penny-packet combat activities taken across the broad front, which the Russians are winning. But it takes more time. Israel is going to find out right now that it can't sustain frontline combat with Hezbollah anymore because to bring, to generate the force creates opportunities for FPV drones. And then, you know, in order to get that force up there, you've got to go through a 20-kilometer highway of death. You know, southern Lebanon — it's not like a wide network. There's only a handful of traffic corridors that the Israelis can operate on, and if those traffic corridors start being interdicted by Hezbollah drones, the Israelis have a problem. The Israelis have a problem, and these videos prove that.

#Nima

Scott, before coming to this, before starting this, I was watching one of these Iranian commanders talking at Friday prayers in Iran. He said the question on the part of Iranians is not if the United States is going to attack or not. The question is, what would be the sort of attack? The attack is going to be assassination again, or they're going to attack with some sort of invasion, or they're going to start attacking infrastructure in Iran. And this is the calculation on the part of Iranians. And when it comes to Netanyahu, I'm sure, because he said that in 60 Minutes, in this interview, he said that he wants the continuation of the war. But what is your understanding and the reality of the continuation of the war? Because Donald Trump is going to get back on Friday. He's going to be in

China. He's going to get back on Friday. If he wants to start the war, it's going to be on Saturday, Sunday, which is, you know, the market is closed and he can start the war. And what do you make of it?

#Scott

Hmm. Let's preface this by pointing out that before Donald Trump went to China, somebody else went to China. I think his name was Araghchi, and I think he's the foreign minister of Iran. He also went to Russia and met with Vladimir Putin. And, you know, one of the messages that apparently Araghchi gave to Putin, who then gave it to Trump in a 90-minute phone call, was the consequences of the renewal of major kinetic activity against Iran.

I don't know the details of it, and it hasn't been spelled out, but my understanding, reading the tea leaves—and you can correct me if I'm wrong, if I'm about to say anything that you're like, "No, Scott, that's not what's happening"—please, because I'm reading tea leaves, and that's never the best way to do it. I'd like to hear it straight up. But the Iranians, I believe, have put the Gulf Arab states on notice—Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia—that their major energy-producing infrastructure will be eradicated on day one if the United States begins that. So right off the bat, Iran has said, "We're eliminating energy production capability in the Gulf Arab states if the United States strikes our energy targets."

#Scott

Now we have an additional thing. I think the Iranians are also saying, we can cut the internet for the Gulf Arab states. We can cut these cables anytime we want to. And they've deployed submarines to that effect, the small Ghadir-class submarines. So there's that. Iran can hit desalination plants, eliminate the water production capacity of Gulf Arab states as we're getting into the hot months with no rainfall. There's that. I think Iraq actually told this to the Chinese as well. And I think Donald Trump's going to be put on notice that that's just not an option. There's, you know, if you do this, the economic consequences you're going to pay are going to be outrageous, and we'll be paying them too.

So let's not do that. The other problem is sustainability. OK, so we start a fight with the Iranians. Let's say that we shipped enough long-range standoff weapons where we can, you know, resume our previous pace of operations. That went for 37 days. I think the best guess right now is that we'll run out of ammunition in less than a week. So we've got a week's worth of bombing. So we're going to accomplish in a week what we couldn't accomplish in 37 days. People say the targeting is better. The best targeting was the targeting we used on day one of the attack. We ended up killing 165 schoolgirls. So there is no military solution. The other thing is we're just out of interceptor missiles.

I mean, we've stripped everything bare. We've brought it in. The Iranians will flood the zone. We'll deplete our stocks. The Gulf Arab states will deplete their stocks. And then we'll just be sitting ducks

for an Iranian ballistic missile force that has gotten stronger, not weaker, over time. And I think this will be told to Donald Trump. So those who say that, you know, there could be a resumption of military action on Saturday... if I were betting, I'd say no. That doesn't mean that it's not going to happen. Of course, we're dealing with a madman in the president, literally an insane individual. I get a lot of pushback on that. You know, people don't realize that I've actually been studying this issue for some time now.

In 2019, I attended a conference that was televised on C-SPAN of psychiatrists and psychologists, board-certified, headed by Bandy Lee, a doctor from Harvard Medical School. I think Harvard Medical. And they were making the case that Donald Trump was a malignant narcissist and that he manifested a mental illness. Now, at that time, I pushed back. And I said, first of all, the Goldwater rule says you can't make a long-distance diagnosis. So what the hell are you doing? And, you know, Donald Trump isn't that. Donald Trump's just a guy with an ego. You know, he's a narcissist like almost every politician is. But to say malignant narcissism, no, no, no. Well, Bandy Lee and her colleagues have been vindicated 100 percent. This man is mentally ill.

The proof is in the pudding. It's there for everybody to see. He's not a president. He's a cult of personality. I just came back from Washington, D.C. That son of a bitch drapes his image over buildings as if he's some sort of god or, you know, all-looming Caesar face there—Donald Trump looking down on you. That's not what this country is supposed to be about. This is a man who tries to bribe senators, get his name on tunnels and in railroads and airports. Why? Because it's a cult of personality. So we don't know how he's going to respond. You know, it's very difficult as a geopolitical analyst or a military analyst or an energy security analyst to think logically when we have to deal with the mentally ill, because they don't think logically.

But in case he has a moment of coherence in China, I think he's going to be told that there is no military solution, that you can't win what you're about to start. In fact, it'll only get worse for you. And I think Donald Trump is—I mean, one of the ways that the narcissism plays in favor of a peaceful outcome is hopefully people are telling him, "Mr. President, your legacy is on the line here. This isn't just about a defeat against Iran. We're talking about your political defeat at the polls in November that could lead to the demise of everything you've worked for, that the Trump brand will be torn down. There will be no Trump going forward. You will be eradicated from the history of the United States." And maybe that's enough to get him to say, "Well, maybe let's seek peace and change."

I think he's playing a hard game. Donald Trump has a tendency to come in hard and then back off. He's not very good at the bully role. He got lucky in Venezuela. Frankly speaking, he got very lucky. That MH-47 should have been shot down and everybody in it should have been killed. Instead, a brave pilot completed the mission and they were able to do it. But imagine if that helicopter had gone down and 30 to 40 Delta guys died with it. Where would we be? A whole different world. So he

got lucky in Venezuela, and his luck ran out against Iran. So, you know, this is a man for whom there is no military solution. He needs a political solution. And I think the Chinese and the Russians are going to work with him to give him that. They're not going to do it directly.

Of course, that's not how diplomacy works. But look, we know Vladimir Putin's a very smart man. We know if you listen to his Victory Day speech, how he was stroking the ego of Donald Trump, because he knows that's how you—it's just smart politics. And I think Xi Jinping—look, there's a lot that can be said by China right now about America, about American policy. And if you notice, the Chinese have been relatively silent going into this week. They're not, you know, they're pulling their punches. They're not coming in for the knockout blow, because they recognize the necessity of a brokered deal. And they want to be in a position to broker that deal. And you do that by working with Donald Trump, not against Donald.

#Nima

I think the response of Iran to the proposal, to the U.S. proposal, which Donald Trump said took four days to respond, but basically they needed less than 10 minutes to prepare that document. And this shows the timeline on the side of the Iranians and the timeline on the side of Donald Trump—they're not matching each other. And when it comes to Scott, because looking at what Iran is talking about—putting an end to the war on all fronts, sanctions, frozen assets—it's not in the hands of the U.S. president.

That's why I think they're talking this way. They want something—if they reach some sort of agreement—between two countries, not two presidents, because they had that failed experience with the United States with the JCPOA. They had it signed by the president of the United States, Barack Obama, and then Donald Trump withdrew from the JCPOA because it wasn't ratified by Congress. This is the mindset right now in Iran for those people who are hoping to have some sort of agreement with the United States. What is your understanding of that?

#Scott

I'll go off of Sergei Lavrov's comments. The United States is agreement-incapable. So if Iran is seeking that kind of agreement, it's never going to happen—not under Donald Trump and, frankly speaking, not under any Democratic leadership. The United States—it's not just the president that's agreement-incapable. The United States is agreement-incapable. That's just a reality. So the best Iran is going to get is a deal. And that deal and 75 cents—I guess not even 75 cents anymore, \$7.50—gets you a cup of coffee. America's word is not its bond anymore. We're a nation of liars, cheats, we deceive. You know, but people will make a deal when desperate. So the best Iran can hope for is a deal of desperation from an American president.

But if Iran's waiting for America institutionally to rise up and do the right thing, it's not going to happen. We're agreement-incapable. The deep state has populated the decision-making centers in

America with people who believe in the nobility of American hegemony, the inevitability of American domination. We are the indispensable nation, and people still believe this nonsense. You know, and they don't understand that the world sees through it. I mean, there's no more facade there. You know, there was a time, as Mark Carney, the Canadian prime minister, noted in his speech at Davos, where the world played along with the rules-based international order.

But he said, we always knew it was fake. We always knew it was just about America, you know, using us to position itself to be a global, you know, dominant leader. But as long as we got the crumbs thrown our way, we went along with it because it appeased us. It made us feel happy. Canada has called it out. They know who we are. Europe knows who we are. All of our friends, ostensible friends, know who we are. And we're the worst nation in the world when it comes to integrity, honor, commitment. We can't be trusted. And yet you have to deal with us. I was asked by a Russian, how do you deal with America? If America's agreement-incapable, do you ignore America? Well, let me ask you this question.

How do you deal with the weather? You ignore it? You can't ignore the weather. It's there. When it rains, you put on a raincoat. When it's hot, you dress light and you deal with that. When it's cold, you put on a coat. America is the weather—unpredictable, ever-changing, sometimes stormy, sometimes not. But you can't have an agreement with the weather. The weather will not adhere to any agreement. The weather will break every agreement because the weather is incapable of having an agreement. That's the United States. We're global weather. And people just have to deal with this right now. And I think Iran's gonna have to adjust to that.

I mean, I understand where the Iranians are coming from. I understand their inherent disdain for the United States because we have violated everything. Not just violated—you know this—we committed perfidy. We said, let's have an agreement, and while we were talking about an agreement, we bombed twice. So, you know, I know where the Iranians are coming from. I'm just giving you my honest assessment. If you think you're going to get an institutionalized agreement out of the United States, you're not. Not right now. We're agreement-incapable. The best you're going to get is a deal of desperation.

And at this point in time, I think China and Russia are willing to accept that. I mean, China, you know, there's a little bit of desperation in China right now because they need energy to get flowing again so that their economic machine isn't disrupted. They don't need a recession. They don't need a depression. They need to continue growth. And now's the time for continued growth because you're looking at opportunities, global opportunities emerging everywhere around the world. And China really is the only economic power capable of meeting these demands. This is their chance. This is their moment. But they need the straightforward moves to be able

#Nima

Scott, how do you see the future of the GCC countries? They have two ways to understand the reality—the new reality of the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf. Either you get closer to Israel, the position of Israel, or not. What is your understanding of the GCC countries and the way they're behaving? We see some sort of fracture, some sort of difference happening—UAE together with Kuwait and Bahrain on one side, and Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman maybe on the other side. Is that the same way in your assessment?

#Scott

Yeah, with UAE being the worst of the worst. I mean, they actually allowed Israeli troops on their soil with Iron Dome during the last conflict. So they've become an extension of Israel into the Persian Gulf. So the UAE is Israel. And, you know, I don't know. Kuwait, they can sit there and posture all they want. Kuwait's literally got zero negotiating position. They don't have a military at all. They're not generating any income. Last month they shipped zero. Qatar's as bad. I mean, their LNG is shut down. They've been damaged. It's going to take a long time to get up and running. You know, and so they need peace. But, you know, they have Al Udeid Air Base. They have to deal with that reality. You know, Bahrain. Poor little tiny Bahrain.

You know, they not only have an unpopular, you know, tyrant as their leader, a Sunni, but they have a Shia majority that, you know, could very well rise up, and nobody wants that in the Gulf Arab countries. Saudi Arabia, we now, you know, interesting, you know, statements or article by Prince Turki, the former head of intelligence, you know, talking about the role of Israel and the pushback by Saudi Arabia. There is no unity among the Gulf, the GCC countries. I think the GCC as an institution is finished. You're already seeing, you know, there's always been long animosity between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that's manifested itself in, you know, geopolitical contests on the African continent. The United Arab Emirates has been exposed as a nation that is as hypocritical as the day is long.

The genocide that they supported in Sudan and elsewhere, you know, is only matched by the genocide that their new ally Israel commits against fellow Arabs, the Palestinians. So the future of the GCC, I think, is very stark. First of all, we just need to recognize that none of them are democratic countries. None of them. They all have these royal families that have been given the throne by British imperialists. And they're still beholden in many ways to Britain and to the United States for their security. They're people who have no legitimacy other than the fact that they have a lot of money that's generated from the wealth of their resources that allows them to create little bubbles of wealth that foreign investors, expatriates, and locals find attractive.

But they're not good people. At the end of the day, many of them aren't. I mean, I'm not saying all of them are bad, but I'm saying that none of them live in the world of reality. None of them know what hard work is. They don't know what it means to, you know, have to be responsible with your budget. You know, these are people who, on a whim, can fly to London in a 747, stay in the best

hotels, go shopping, and come back and not even blink about it. They don't live in the same world as we do. And they've been able to build up this artificial bubble of wealth and significance under an American umbrella of security that no longer exists.

I think they're waking up to the fact—everybody but the United Arab Emirates—although I think they know what the reality is, but they're so heavily committed to the Israel-American axis that they can't pull back. But the other GCC countries, I think they're waking up to the reality that the world has changed and it's not going back the way it was. And that if they're going to survive, if these political and economic elites are going to stay in power, they're going to have to adapt to this new reality. And that new reality is that Iran is here.

Iran is not going away, and they're going to have to learn how to live in peace and harmony with Iran. Maybe not best friends, but not enemies either. And that the role played by the United States must be diminished or eliminated altogether. That the day and age of American military infrastructure dominating the region is over. That in order to move forward with Iran, you're going to have to send the American military packing. So that's what I think is happening right now. It's very interesting to see the role that Saudi Arabia is going to play in this. But it's also interesting to see what role Turkey is going to play. People have to remember that Turkey has close relationships with the Qataris. Turkey is a regional player as well. So there's a big Turkish military presence in Qatar. You know, they're there.

But I just think it's a brave new world right now in the Persian Gulf, one where Iran is dominant. And you have all these people right now that refuse to acknowledge that. I mean, the president calls anybody who recognizes reality a traitor, treasonous. And then you have a bunch of think tanks. I mean, look at Robert Kagan. He wrote a big article in *The Atlantic* that says, you know, checkmate Iran, making it sound like Iran did everything right. But his solution isn't to work with Iran to create a better world. The solution is a bigger war. Bigger war. There's not going to be a bigger war. Where are the troops going to come from? In order to generate the 1.2 to 2 million-strong army America would need to actually physically occupy Iran, if that could even be done, we don't have that military. We'd have to go into conscription.

And the American people aren't, I don't think, ready to die to invade Iran. For what purpose? Why? You know, it hasn't been articulated. It's not as though Iran carried out a Pearl Harbor attack against the United States. We carried out the Pearl Harbor attack against them. So I think it's a new world, and the GCC countries are going to have to adapt to this world. And I don't think the GCC is long for this world, because you can't speak of a GCC whose existence is predicated on opposing Iran continuing to exist with Iran. It's like saying NATO can exist and have good relations with Russia. It's impossible. NATO will never be able to have good relations with Russia. So if Europe wants to have better relations with Russia, NATO has to go away. And if the Gulf Arab states want to have better relations with Iran, the GCC has to go away.

#Nima

You remember Russia. One of the main objectives of Russia in this war in Ukraine was to reach a security architecture for the region. They're basically, China and Russia together with Iran, talking about a new security architecture for the Persian Gulf. And do you see it being the same way that we've been witnessing with the case of Russia, where one party doesn't want to participate in that sort of security architecture — I'm talking about the Europeans — they're not willing to cooperate with Russia to reach that sort of agreement. But putting that case of Russia aside, how is that going to get these countries in the Persian Gulf to come together and have a new security architecture? Is that going to happen, in your opinion?

#Scott

Well, first of all, I think you say put aside Russia, but we can't. We have to start with Russia and Russia's relationship with Europe. Your assessment of Europe not being prepared is dated, yeah, because right now, as we speak, Europe's getting strangled economically because of the energy. Exactly. And what we see more and more is Europe saying, we've got to learn how to talk with Russia. And you have Europeans saying, we have no choice but to talk about how we can get back on, you know, and start getting Russian energy flowing in, right? It's required for our survival. They're really dying.

#Nima

You know, the conflict in the middle.

#Scott

Yeah. So now we have the Gulf Arab nations, and it's sort of that they don't need Iranian oil, but they need Iran to give them permission to sell their oil, to sell their energy. They're dying. They have no future. They're going to have to do business with Iran. This is the thing. There is no alternative. They can choose a path of confrontation where they seek regime change in Iran, but that's already been tried, and it failed. Iran is on a different level of escalation management now. They manage their escalation up to the point of no return. But the next time this war starts, I think Iran crosses the point of no return and eliminates the Gulf Arab states as economically and politically viable nations. And I think the Gulf Arab states are starting to recognize this reality.

And therefore, there is the absolute necessity of normalizing relations with Iran under a new paradigm, a new security architecture. So I think, you know, in a way, Europe and the Middle East are both facing the same harsh reality. How do you adapt to a world where the United States is no longer present and no longer capable of providing the security guarantees that it once did, around which you built everything? Now you have to take responsibility for security. And by doing so, can you sustain the hostile posture that Europe, for instance, has against Russia and the Gulf Arab states have against Iran? The answer is no, you can't. You're going to have to learn how to de-escalate

and work in peaceful harmony with Russia in the case of Europe, or Iran in the case of the Gulf Arab states.

#Nima

You've mentioned that Donald Trump is not going to get any sort of agreement, or he's not capable of making a new agreement with Iran, but you believe that he may get a deal with Iran. What does that mean for the United States and for Donald Trump himself as he's headed toward the midterm elections in the United States? And what's the tone, what's the understanding of the American people right now?

#Scott

Well, understanding that, A, as I said before, it's impossible to accurately describe what's going on inside the brain of Donald Trump. And you can't really answer that question unless you know what's going on inside his brain. And B, I don't pretend to speak on behalf of the Iranian nation. I mean, you know, they get to make their final decisions. And I've heard Iranian officials say, we're not here to create a politically viable off-ramp for Donald Trump. You know, because that's something I've been saying, and I continue to say that the only way this war comes to an end is if people make it politically possible for Donald Trump to declare some sort of victory.

Now, what are the two issues that are the most important right now? Nuclear and the Strait of Hormuz. On the nuclear, I think, you know, the key here is for Donald Trump to be able to tell the American people that the pathway for an Iranian bomb has been closed. And the deal that the Omani government had been able to help facilitate and negotiate as of February 26th did just that. And that means that from a purely political standpoint, the president is going to say he got a better deal than Barack Obama did. And that's a political victory. So I think anything Iran can do to make the February 26th agreement a reality, and there may have to be some other things.

First of all, we don't know the total details of what was in the February 26th deal, but, you know, I do think that Iran shipping the 60% enriched uranium out of Iran to a non-U.S. party, let's call it Russia, is the path forward. The Iranians right now seem to be reticent—not not supporting that—but that's because they don't want to be seen as caving into the threats of the United States. But if this issue is pitched a different way, perhaps with a middleman—Russia or China, or both pitching it—and the president is told maybe don't declare victory till after the deal is consummated, I think you can solve the nuclear problem. I don't think it's an insurmountable issue, regardless of what the president says.

I think it's actually one of the more easily resolved issues. The Strait of Hormuz is more complicated because Iran can't give up the control that it now has, because that is the key to their deterrence against continued conflict. But, you know, it's very difficult to imagine any peace agreement where the world and the Gulf Arab states allow themselves to be held hostage by the whim of Iran. So I

think there's a compromise there. This is where I think the Chinese will step in, offer certain, you know, reconstruction incentives for Iran, work with the United States to get sanctions lifted—not in the long term, but in the short term—to get frozen assets unfrozen quickly.

And in exchange, to have Iran agree to some sort of joint stewardship of the Hormuz Strait with maybe Oman, which they've already talked about, you know, some sort of compromise there where it's not 100 percent Iranian-controlled, where there's a joint thing and it's based upon a seat, even though the United States is agreement-incapable. I do think that China can create an agreement within the GCC states and Iran regarding the, you know, implementation of some sort of deal with the Strait of Hormuz. And if you solve those two problems, everything else resolves itself because, you know, Iran doesn't, you know, can insist on having U.S. bases. That creates a political problem.

But the reality is the U.S. isn't going to be able to keep their bases in the region because they've been blown up. And for these other states to be part of this Hormuz project, you know, maybe you can't have military bases on your soil or something of that nature. So I think the United States' footprint will be reduced significantly, which again is one of the Iranian demands. When it comes to sanctions being lifted, I think you're going to see the nuclear sanctions go away. I think the missile sanctions might stay in place. One of those unspoken things where we don't talk about them getting rid of their missiles, but we're not going to reward them—you know, some sort of compromise there.

But it'll go away over time because I think in the long term, what the Russians and the Chinese are going to tell the Iranians is the closer you embrace us, the more difficult you make it for Israel and the United States to resume military operations down the road. If you want a security guarantee, then pivot to the east, embrace and start investing, start becoming part of that system. And you'll make it impossible for the United States and Israel to talk about resuming conflict. And once you get the Gulf Arab states to agree to peaceful coexistence with Iran, you know, you undermine the Abraham Accords, which means now Israel's in a huge problem.

It's like, you know, going to buy a new house thinking you have collateral to put up, but finding you have no collateral. You know, the Abraham Accords are the collateral for Greater Israel—you know, the potential of economic development and prosperity. When that shuts down, there is no more economic prosperity, no more economic development. And Israel is not talking about sustaining Greater Israel; it's about surviving as Israel currently exists. Is that even possible without the Abraham Accords? I think the answer is no. So, but this, this, this is—I think there's a grand deal, a grand bargain to be made there.

I also think that the United States is, and Russia—that Russia stepping in to help out the United States will put more pressure on Ukraine and the European nations to accept terms that will be acceptable to Russia, and Trump will get a twofer. And that's the other way you sell it to the American people: I broke the global paradigm. I helped resolve the Iranian problem that nobody else has been able to do. And I also get credit now for bringing an end to the war with Russia. That's all the malignant narcissist wants is credit, to be honest. Just stroke his ego. He doesn't care

about it. He's not smart enough to understand the substance. Stroke his ego. I'm all in favor of that right now if it brings about a just and equitable peace for Iran and for the region.

#Nima

Scott, as we talked, we know that Lavrov is in India. He just arrived in India, and Rakhshi is going to be there. The foreign ministers of the BRICS countries are going to have a meeting there from May 14 to May 15, two days of meetings. And when it comes to Donald Trump, you remember that Donald Trump was so much concerned about the dollar and the future of the dollar, and right now, with the new war in the Middle East, I see these BRICS countries coming together in a way that they need some sort of alternative. They have to do something about it. And how do you see BRICS finding its way? Because we have all these countries together. We know the differences among these countries, and they're not perfect.

And what they understand perfectly are their differences, as we saw with the case of Russia and India during the war in Ukraine, as we saw with the case of Iran and India during the war between Iran and the United States. India somehow being tricky toward Russia, toward Iran, but after all, they're part of BRICS. And you don't see any sort of tension between Russia and India, between Iran and India, because the two governments perfectly understand the position of the other. And these countries are getting together. What is BRICS? What is the future of BRICS? And how do they see a better future for the peace and prosperity of the countries that are part of BRICS?

#Scott

You know, BRICS has great potential. There's no doubt about that. But, you know, Donald Trump is openly hostile toward BRICS, and the United States still retains the ability to move the global economic and geopolitical needle. And so, you know, Venezuela was—well, the idea is to take Venezuela off the board. Venezuela was courting BRICS membership; that's been eliminated. It's this message to Brazil about the dominance of the United States. And then this whole idea to get rid of Iran as a BRICS member and replace it with a government friendly to the United States, you know, to isolate Russia, to break up Russia and China, and to keep India more on the side of the West than on the side of the East.

Trump has been working really hard over time to kill BRICS. And I have to say, before the Iran war, he was doing a pretty good job. He was doing a pretty good job. He was making it complicated for BRICS to grow and mature the way that many of the world leaders who were part of BRICS had envisioned. But today, BRICS is an extremely viable thing. A key to it, of course, is the continued survival of Iran. And I think that what you're seeing in these meetings is the BRICS nations coming together to view Iran as a pathway toward their collective relevance. Whether or not they're going to be able to resolve the dollar issue, I'm not a smart enough economist to answer that question.

I just will point out some basic things that I focus on. Again, Michael Hudson out there and all the smart people out there might say, well, Scott, you're not focused on the right thing. I accept that. My résumé does not say world-renowned economist. But I am a world-renowned guy who owns dollars. What I know about the dollar is that when we linked it to the petrodollar, we pumped more dollars out there than anybody else in the world. In fact, our entire system, the way the global economy works, is premised on the petrodollar. People keep saying they want to replace the petrodollar with gold. With gold.

With what? What nation's out there willing to sacrifice all of the rational economic stability that they've imparted through structures and discipline and say, let's do it? We're just going to start printing yuan or rupees or rubles. Just print them, because that's how you have a petrodollar — you just print dollars. The Chinese aren't ready for that. No one's ready for that. There is no currency in the world that can do that. Now, you can have localized relations where you trade currencies, and we see that right now. Iran is doing that with Russia and all that. But there's a limit.

There's a cap because there's only a finite amount of those currencies available, and those nations aren't in the business of running printing presses anymore, or they never have been. So I think one of the things that Russia and China are looking for is to bring stability back into the global economic system, which means that the dollar will be retained for the moment as the global reserve currency. Now, other nations can offset that with baskets of currencies and things of that nature. But I don't think anybody is ready to have an absolute replacement for the dollar. And until you're ready to replace the dollar, you have to learn to deal with the dollar.

And this is, again, why I think the meetings with Xi — you know, the interesting thing now is there's actually talk about a meeting between Putin and Trump before the year's over, that there's whispers of this kind of thing happening. I think we're seeing the United States, because of the loss in Iran, having to readjust its global ambitions. First of all, we need the petrodollar to survive. Our economy is absolutely — we can't survive without it. It would lead to total collapse of the dollar economy. And nobody in the world wants that. As much as people hate the United States, you need to understand, we are the largest economy in the world. I mean, the world will not function without our economy. That doesn't mean that we're the driver.

#Nima

Which the regime of sanctions is destroying as we speak.

#Scott

Of course it is. Sanctions are horrible. It's stupid. It's suicidal. It's dumb. It's crazy. I agree. I'm not defending the regime of sanctions. I'm saying that the world isn't seeking to destroy the American economy. The Trump presidency is seeking to destroy the American economy through tariffs and

sanctions. I think you're going to see a normalization of that because of this, because we need stability right now. Trump can't back up the arrogant posture that, you know, the national security strategy was putting forward and Scott Ritter has been trying to project economically. We can't do that. We're going to have to learn to get along with nations. We're agreement-incapable because, you know, I would never trust the United States at this point in time. Don't ever let your guard down.

But the point is, you know, reality dictates solutions. And the current reality is that the American vision of continued hegemony is dashed. We don't have the military ability to sustain that, the economic prowess to sustain that. And we no longer have the ability to leverage threats of American physical violence or economic violence into achieving outcomes that we dictate. We're going to have to work with the world. As imperfect as it is to work with America, that's just the reality. This Chinese trip — all eyes should be on it, because this is the first test of whether or not Donald Trump is capable of adjusting to new realities. I mean, if he comes out of China and has achieved nothing, that's a signal that the United States is incapable of not just reaching an agreement, but even conceiving an agreement.

That conceptually, Trump is unable to adjust his narcissistic worldview to reality. So it'll be interesting to see. The meeting in India right now, I think, is, again, remember, as much as America is trying to adjust to these realities, the world's adjusting to this new reality too. It's a brave new world out there. This time, three months ago, no one was talking about, you know, America being powerless. I mean, everybody's talking about Taiwan, you know, they were saying, yeah, well, America, the Americans think they're going to do this and the other thing. But there's always a little question in people's minds: could America pull it off? I mean, you know, big military. Today, there's just no debate.

We don't have the capacity to pull it off. Europe is no longer talking about, you know, American air power being dominant. We recognize that there are limitations to American air power, especially when we expend all of our long-range standoff munitions. So Europe is now talking about how to go it alone. What's going to happen to AUKUS? What's going to happen to the Quad? What's going to happen to the tripartite agreement with South Korea, Japan, and the United States now that we've stripped all of the air defense systems out of there? We just told the Japanese, you know, one of their big things was the ability to guarantee to strike back if they were struck by North Korea — to have their own capability to strike back.

This was premised on 400 Tomahawk missiles that they were buying from the United States. And we just told them, no, you ain't getting them. And the entire Japanese strategy was built around that. Now they have to reconsider it. The world has to adjust. America's ostensible friends and allies have to adjust. But the people in opposition to the United States have to adjust. And I think that's what's going on in India right now — it's the great adjustment. But, you know, you seem more optimistic about India than I am. I am not optimistic about India because I don't think India... India hasn't

made a strategic decision yet. Remember, India was in Israel making common cause with the Israelis right before this war started. That doesn't sit well. And India is problematic when it comes to China and Pakistan.

I mean, Pakistan... I think Pakistan is one of the great superstars of this crisis. The leadership that Pakistan has shown, the maturity that Pakistan has shown, the ability of Pakistan to work with the United States, with China, with Russia, with Iran, and others to create the potential for a diplomatic solution. If ever there was an entity that deserved the Nobel Peace Prize, if this conflict can be brought to an end, I think the Pakistani leadership deserves collectively the Nobel Peace Prize for the role they played in making peace possible, because it's amazing what they've done. Superb diplomacy. But, you know, India is problematic. I mean, India is a problem child. It's big, it's powerful, but they don't know where they want to be in the world.

And as long as India is indecisive like that, now maybe this meeting will be the beginning of India's, you know, transition to being serious about BRICS. But right now India is not serious about BRICS. Not serious at all. India is more serious about, you know, G20 viability and, you know, hoping against hope to get an invitation into the G7, which will never happen. You know, India also continues to lobby for relevance at the Security Council, and they feel they need the United States' support to get that. So India is putting far too much weight on a relationship with the United States that's no longer globally relevant. I mean, the bottom line is India's future must be with repairing relations with China and turning BRICS into a formidable, viable international economic forum.

#Nima

Thank you so much, Scott, for being with us today. Just let me bring up your info here. If you want to follow Scott, you can go on [scottritter.com](https://www.scottritter.com).

#Scott

Chapter five. It took me forever to publish Chapter Five, but I got it out there.

#Nima

Yeah, it's, there is something like a donation. You can go there and donate and help Scott because he's doing a tremendous job. He's doing everything, you know, he's informing all of us.

#Scott

Let me just make a pitch on that because I have a trip coming up soon. People find out later why I'm not committing to the day. Let me just put it this way: the Ukrainians have tried to kill me three times, and I don't want to help them on the fourth. So, I'm a little, I'm not as detail-oriented as maybe I should be, but there's a trip coming up. You know, the trip seeks to comprehensively reset

my database when it comes to Russia. You know, I've traveled to Russia a lot recently, but it's primarily Moscow and St. Petersburg doing interviews. But it hasn't been the deep dive into Russia that I actually did in 2023, 2024. So I'm operating off of perceptions and insights that were developed two years ago, more than two years ago.

And as an analyst, I have a duty and responsibility to update that. So I have a trip coming up that's designed to do just that. But I go as an independent journalist. I'm not sponsored by anybody. Nobody pays my airfare. Nobody pays for my hotels. They don't pay for my food. They don't pay for anything. If I interview somebody, I book the studio. I pay for the videographer, the whole thing. And it ain't cheap. But if you think what I'm doing is important—and I feel, look, I just had, my daughter just gave birth to a grand... you know, I got a granddaughter now. And, you know, whereas in the past, what I did was more out of, I mean, there was a sense of moral responsibility as a global citizen, but it was also based upon, you know, just intellectual curiosity, meaning that I do this because it interests me.

My moral compass has been reset, meaning that this is no longer just intellectual curiosity. The work I'm doing to try and promote peace and everything is now a personal crusade. Not on my behalf—I'm old—but on my granddaughter's. I got a couple of years of viability left, as long as these knees work and this brain works and the heart keeps ticking. You know, I'm not going to go gently into that good night. I'm going to rage, rage against the dying of the light. That's sort of a takeoff of Dylan Thomas's poem. But, you know, the responsibility is on all of us now to work to make the world a better place. And I spent a lot of time over the course of the past several years, you know, buying into the notion of generational gaps.

You know, I'm a boomer, and people make fun of us boomers. Okay, there's Zoomers, and then there's Gen X and Gen Z and all this other stuff. And with the birth of my granddaughter, I've come to the conclusion that's just all total bullshit—that there are no generational gaps. We are a collective of humans, and if we don't work together collectively, we'll die collectively. That's the fate of all of us if we don't learn how to figure this thing out. And so the idea that boomers need to step aside—I'm sorry, I ain't going to step aside. I'll follow if somebody wants to take the lead. But if you're not going to take the lead, the old Marine in me says, then take charge and move forward. And right now, there are very few people doing what we're doing.

We have to lead by example. And so I will continue to keep doing this work to lead by example and hopefully get people to say, hey, let's help them. And then they can take over. When my knees give out, I can pass the baton off to them. But I'm not going to sit on the sidelines. I'm not going to sit back and take it easy. Even my wife is on my side now. I mean, the birth of this granddaughter—because she was one of these, you've done enough, you've caused enough trouble in your life, maybe you want to sit back and we're just going to take the easy path into retirement. And now she understands the absolute urgency of what we're doing, what I'm doing, what you're doing, what everybody's doing.

So that's a long way of saying, if you support this and you think the work that I'm doing contributes, you can go to ScottRitter.com. It takes you to my Substack page. The subscription is free, so you can get access to about 90% of what's up there on the tabs for free. It doesn't cost you a thing. A paid subscription pays my salary. That means the lights, the computers, the roof over my head, the food in my refrigerator—that's what pays my salary. The donations allow me to travel. The donations are purely to support taking independent journalism on the road. And right now there's a need—I mean, you always need a paycheck—but there's a bigger need for donations than there is for paid subscriptions.

Because I've got this trip coming up and there are certain fiscal realities that manifest themselves. The ruble gets stronger. That makes it more difficult for me because that means that what used to cost X amount of dollars costs X plus. The price of aviation fuel has made plane tickets one-third more expensive. Everything gets more expensive. And so... I'm going to take the trip. The things are going to happen, but any donations you provide are what I call trip enhancers, meaning the more resources you have, the more opportunities you have when you go on this trip.

So if people wish to support, please go to the donate button, click it, but also support Nima, support everybody, but support Nima. I don't know what you do to raise, you know, to get support, subscriptions, clicks, whatever, but whatever Nima does, do it. Um, if you think this discussion was valuable, this guy's a rising superstar, or he's already entered. When we first talked, you had just started this, right? It was almost like a hobby for you. I mean, it was like, you know, I'm bored in Brazil, what am I going to do? I'll just do this little dialogue thing. Um, but you've turned into an institution that, I mean, the whole world respects the work that you're doing. Um, and what you're doing is important because I love the title, Dialogue Works.

It does work. Dialogue works. Works for what? Works for peace. And so, help Nima promote dialogue. Give him the opportunities to interview better people than me. There are people out there right now. I come back because he's a friend. He asked me. We do it. But at some point in time, I'm going to become irrelevant. But keep Nima viable so that more people come in and talk to him. Get the bigger names out there. Get the better analysts and get this dialogue thing working. That can only work if you support him. It doesn't happen in a vacuum. So, and support everybody. I mean, we brought up other names. We speak about Larry Johnson. We speak about Judge Napolitano. We speak about Garland Nixon. We speak about Danny Haiphong.

You know, everybody, these are the—this is the tip of the spear when it comes to independent journalism. These are the people that create the opportunity, Glenn Diesen, to have dialogue outside of the controlled framework of mainstream media. Support independent journalism. You'll keep this kind of discussion going well beyond the time when my knees stop working, my brain goes—I mean, one of these days I'll be drooling into a cup. So, you know, it'll be what it'll be. But if we create institutions that survive the personalities, then the institution of independent journalism—non-corporate sponsored, non-government controlled—is an institution that needs to be sustained over time.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much, Scott. Great pleasure, as always.

#Scott

Thanks. And hopefully I won't be drooling into a cup next week and we have another conversation.

#Nima

Yeah. See you.

#Scott

Have a good one. Bye bye.