

Scott Ritter: Why Israel Can't Strike Iran: The Drone War Reality

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#Nima

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—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. 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, you know, all the honey and roses that are 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 live 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—Pete Hegseth says he had to roll 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, 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? He hasn't solved Hamas.

#Nima

Just ask the IDF how it's going in Lebanon with Hezbollah.

#Scott

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 issue. 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 restored. 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 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, has said it's 120%. And 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. And Iran, like I said, is at 120%. 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 Araqchi. That's the voice they need to listen to. Netanyahu, I spit on.

#Nima

Scott, when it comes to Lebanon, you just mentioned, and I'm sure that you watched those two videos showing the FPV drones hitting Lebanon, you know, Iron Dome batteries. And 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—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, fire at an area, and rain down on the ground. 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 FPVs are coming in very low to the ground, and they come in literally under the radar.

And once they get past that radar, I mean, as you see, they have free rein. 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 gotta act now. You know, something bad is going to happen, I gotta 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, you know, 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—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 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-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, where the force-on-force area—the red zone—and they extend it back.

And I think the Hezbollah FPV drones are operating up to 20 kilometers deep. In Russia and Ukraine, 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 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 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? Is the attack going to be assassination again, or are they going to attack with some sort of invasion, or are they going to, you know, start attacking infrastructures 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 or Sunday, which is, you know, the market is closed and he can start the war. And what do you make of it?

#Scott

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 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. So there's that. 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 Araghchi 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 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, and 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, will 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 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. 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.

And 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 Trump.

#Nima

I think the response of Iran to the proposal, to the U.S. proposal, which little Donald Trump said took four days to respond, but basically, you know, 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's 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. 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. And they don't understand that the world sees through it. I mean, there's no more facade. 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 using us to position itself to be a globally 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. But 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. 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?

Do 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 lightly 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 going to 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, 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 this 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 Strait of Hormuz to be opened up.