

# Anthony Aguilar: Israel's Defeat BEGINS: Hezbollah & Yemen Just Hit HARD

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## #Nima

Hi everybody, today's Thursday, May 14, 2026, and our dear friend, our brother, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Aguilar, is here with us. Welcome back, Tony.

## #Anthony

Thank you. Thanks for having me. It's always a pleasure to have these great discussions with you.

## #Nima

Yeah. Let's start, Tony, with what's going on between Israel and Lebanon. I think we are seeing new footage coming out of Lebanon. Hezbollah is publishing that footage, showing that they're hitting everything — the cars being used by the IDF, the Iron Dome batteries. You see they're attacking the tanks. You see what's going on between Israel and Lebanon. Do you think that in Israel and Lebanon, we haven't seen these sorts of attacks on the part of Hezbollah before? What is happening on the battlefield, in your opinion, between Israel and Lebanon?

## #Anthony

So what's very interesting to me is that the battlefield in southern Lebanon has not only become a peripheral war or peripheral conflict in the war with Iran. In a way, it has become the driving factor when you consider Israel's stance on the war in Iran not ending overall, because of the negotiation accords that Iran has tied to Lebanon and that Israel intends to continue to fight in Lebanon. And the fact that Hezbollah has gained not only motivation for what they're doing — that they are standing against an existential threat to Lebanon — but they are having negotiations, quantifiable, measurable effects against the IDF in southern Lebanon, militarily and psychologically.

This is indisputable. When you look at the success that Hezbollah is having on the battlefield in southern Lebanon, south of the Litani River, and defending — essentially, the Litani River has become much like the Marne in World War I — Hezbollah has become the rock of the Litani. They

are holding. And to me, that is not surprising, because what we are now learning with the IDF, and something that I have known and tried to express in the past but I think now is clear to see: the Israeli Defense Forces are designed to conduct defensive, homeland-style operations. They are very good in Gaza when they are dropping 2,000-pound bombs on neighborhoods and fighting unarmed women and children.

When they have to go up against an enemy that is well-equipped, well-trained, and has motivation to defend, we see that they are not doing well. But also, much like what we witnessed with Iran in the Strait of Hormuz, we are seeing Hezbollah's asymmetric warfare capability. They're now using fiber-optic-controlled first-person view drones, the FPV drones that they learned from what's happening on the battlefields of Ukraine. They are using asymmetric tactics quite successfully. And this will continue. The scale, the speed, and the op tempo of this war are too fast for the IDF to change in stride. They are going to continue to get hit pretty hard in southern Lebanon.

## **#Nima**

We know we had the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in China. One of the most important issues in this meeting was the case of the Middle East and basically the Strait of Hormuz, which wasn't a problem before the war started, before Donald Trump decided to go to this war. In your opinion, what would Donald Trump want from China when it comes to the Middle East that would somehow help him? Because in the case of the Strait of Hormuz so far, we know that everyone — Iranians say we want to open up the Strait of Hormuz — it was part of that ceasefire with Donald Trump. Then Donald Trump, the day after announcing the ceasefire, said, "I'm right now blockading the Iranian blockade," which was the main reason. But what can China do for the United States in the Middle East? Or is he seeking some sort of new relationship between the United States and China in the Middle East?

## **#Anthony**

Well, I think that Donald Trump is desperately seeking a better relationship with China and anything that may distract or alleviate pressure from what is happening in the Strait of Hormuz and against Iran. The problem with that is that it's too little, too late. The rest of the world, including China, Russia, Iran, and other nations now in the Middle East, aren't buying the narrative any longer. And they see, you know, from what we saw, Marco Rubio on Air Force One, on the flight over the pond, in his interview said that, you know, we want to ask China to put pressure on Iran on the war and in the Strait of Hormuz.

Well, if you're China, your response is clearly, well, that situation didn't exist until you created it. So though China does have—it does impact China, especially the flow of oil and petroleum products and helium and other types of products through the Strait of Hormuz—China can endure. China can sustain. What it really now comes down to is the test of the resolve of the partnership and the alliance between China and Iran, China, Iran, and Russia. And when you put those all together, they

can withstand the pressure economically, militarily, diplomatically far longer than the United States can alone.

And if you look at it, there's nuance to this visit, and I would encourage everyone to pay attention to each of the events all the way from the beginning. When Air Force One landed, Xi Jinping was not there to greet the president. That was not by accident. That was by design. That is a clear diplomatic leader-to-leader message: you're coming to me, I'll see you when I have time. Go talk to my foreign affairs minister. I'll see you tomorrow, or I'll see you tonight at dinner. That is a move of power. That is a move of influence. That is a classic Trump script flipped on himself.

And you saw Trump walk down the stairs and walk down the red carpet, escorted by no one and not walking with the president. And then later that night, when there was dinner, Xi Jinping shook his hand and they went to the Great Hall of the People, and they had their big meeting, and Xi Jinping laid it out. He was the first to speak. Again, that is another indicator of manipulation and power. And then he made his points very clear. And what we see now is that Donald Trump is on the back foot. Donald Trump is on the—I wouldn't even say the defense—he is on the “how can I get out of this trip with any semblance of success?” from every little part of it.

And I would, like I said, I would encourage anyone to just keep up with the daily updates with the press—the White House press being kept out of the motorcade, the Secret Service agents that couldn't get in to provide security within the People's Royal Palace. These are all little things for China to demonstrate clearly to this administration that we are in control. You are here at our welcome, and we will dictate this visit. I cannot help but think that at the end of this visit, when Donald Trump and Marco Rubio and Pete Hegseth and the billionaire tycoons that Donald Trump brought with him, when they get their little doggy bag and “thanks for visiting” gift bag on their way out the door, there's going to be a pretty stern warning from China to say the war in Iran has to end.

And whether it ends with you, the United States, taking a hit, taking a lick with who controls the Strait of Hormuz or your bases in the Middle East, that's something you might have to take. But if you continue this war and you escalate, we will become directly involved. And I think that that is not a bluff. And I think that Donald Trump realizes the severity of that. Again, if you were to say the People's Liberation Army Navy against the United States Navy one to one, well, of course, the United States Navy would have an advantage.

But when you consider how thin the U.S. Navy is spread, the dynamics of the situation, the inclusion of additional Chinese aircraft only make this situation worse. This could become very complicated for the United States. Donald Trump's got some hard decisions to make in the next week. We know that Israel is pushing for more war. We know that he himself is looking for a way out. And we know that China and Russia are both sitting back and saying, well, you better negotiate because if you start another shooting war, we're getting involved. So, you know, Donald Trump is caught between the horns of a dilemma of his own making.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. He said, I think... In the interview that Benjamin Netanyahu had on 60 Minutes, he said that he feels that the war is just going to continue for months to get to some sort of end, some sort of final stage. But when it comes to the months... looking at the mindset of Donald Trump and his administration, he's gonna get back on Friday. Tomorrow, he's gonna get back to the United States, and he's gonna face the same sort of conditions that he had before going to China. He has to do something in the Middle East. Is that going to be what Robert Kagan suggested to him, the hardcore neocon Zionist, in his new article in The Atlantic? His suggestion is the best option for Donald Trump is just leaving the region and coming back home.

And the other option would be what other neocons are suggesting. And Donald Trump himself, he mentioned that before going to China — sending more weapons to Iranian people to do regime change in Iran, or doubling down in the region, staying in the region for many years to come, for many months to come. What is that, in your opinion, happening in the mind of the Trump administration? I know that it's difficult to understand it, but you look at the reality of what's going on in West Asia, particularly I'm talking about the Strait of Hormuz. What do you see? What would be the outcome for Donald Trump? What would be the solution for his sort of objectives?

## **#Anthony**

So there's the walk-away option, which we know has been discussed, and there's the stay. Don't escalate to the point of another large-scale conflict or a hot war, but stay and maintain the pressure, potentially with the hopes of weakening the current government, the Ayatollah, or the new Ayatollah, potentially raising forces with the Kurds or countries within the GCC to take further action and involvement to squeeze and pressure and then lead to that regime change plan. That would take a long time. That's not going to happen in a year. We're talking a long time. And Donald Trump is really at the precipice of the decisions that George Bush had to make with Afghanistan and Iraq.

When we went into Iraq and the primary mission was accomplished, there were many that told Bush, hey, leave, leave. It's a mess. Leave or we're going to be here for a long time. And we chose to stay. Afghanistan — the defeat of the Taliban, the Northern Alliance, warlords now in charge in this fledgling government with Hamid Karzai, himself a warlord, backed by other warlords. It's a mess. But there were folks that said, leave now. Leave now or we'll be here forever. And we stayed. So looking at the tradition of the United States when it comes to becoming involved in quagmires — Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan — and I remind people about Syria.

In 2014, when we chased ISIS into Syria with drones, and that turned into ground forces, and that turned into a long-term occupation, we're still there. We're still there, going on 12 years. So, if the lessons of history have shown us, the United States will likely stay, because to walk away, especially in this situation where Iran would have unarguable control of the Strait of Hormuz and the region in disarray and the U.S. presence diminished, to walk away now would be a situation that I don't think

the president can handle, because the gas prices certainly won't go down. Grocery prices certainly won't go down.

And in the time that Donald Trump is visiting China, the new report on fuel and groceries and everything that most Americans need to live have all gone up in price. He's coming home to a pretty testy diplomatic environment after leaving a trip in China, which was not successful. I would say it was probably a grade of a C-minus. So to leave, it's one of those situations where it's an option. I don't think that that's going to happen. I think that we're going to see the gearing up of the United States Navy and U.S. maritime forces, like the Marines, being deployed into this specific region for quite some time — certainly not weeks, likely months and years.

## **#Nima**

There are two points in the statement. In the statement from the White House in the aftermath of the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, two points are related to the situation with the case of the Strait of Hormuz. One of them is opening up the Strait of Hormuz, and the second one is the demilitarization of the Strait of Hormuz. Both of them are somehow related to Donald Trump and the blockade that Donald Trump is implementing or is having with the case of the Strait. And how do you see the blockade? Because if you agree with Xi Jinping in a meeting that you're going to do something about it, demilitarization means that you have to leave China. It doesn't mean anything else, in my opinion. Is that going to happen? Or is it going to be something like what we've seen with the meeting he had with Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, which didn't happen in 24 hours? Everybody just forgot about what had happened, what they had promised during the meeting. What do you expect from the Trump administration?

## **#Anthony**

Well, the Trump administration, because, you know, on the domestic front, has relieved, fired, or pushed out the majority of admirals and generals that have a brain. He's now with sycophants and yes-men who will probably follow what he and/or Pete Hegseth want to do rather than standing up and saying what we should do. And when you look at the U.S. naval blockade, I would give you the example of, let's say, the Strait of Hormuz is a soccer goal, and you kick a goal and the goalie blocks it, but it bounces off his hands into the stands and someone catches it, and saying that, oh, that guy in the stands that caught the ball was the goalie. No.

I mean, the distant blockade that the United States Navy is currently enacting is almost 300 nautical miles south of the strait itself, in the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, and further forces even further into the Indian Ocean near Diego Garcia. Nothing is actually in the Persian Gulf except for what forces we have in Bahrain and Qatar along the western coast of the Persian Gulf. So the U.S. blockade is not really doing much other than with ships that get through the strait that Iran allows. The U.S. either allows them to continue or turns them around. It makes no sense strategically as a blockade. And again, if you look through the annals of Navy history to see the blockade of a

blockade, it doesn't really make sense when you consider that the thing that you're blockading is within control of the blockade that you're blockading.

It doesn't make a lot of sense. So the demilitarization aspect, that goes both ways. And regardless of how you want to put it, well, Iran does, geographically, physically, by maritime law and by their proximity, have the ability to physically control the strait. I mean, that's just a fact of world geography. And if you look at what we've seen in the past with the demilitarization of strategic points such as the Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, other strategic passages, those are often contentious in terms of who controls them, who levies the taxes, who pays who.

In this situation, it is very likely that Iran will be able to maintain control, to some degree—whether shared or total—of the Strait of Hormuz, and profit, either in part or in total, for the foreseeable future. And if the United States wants to stay and defend with this distant blockade of a blockade, it's only going to draw down on our readiness and forces, and it's going to cost a lot. If we decide to say, okay, we're out, you administer it under these conditions, Iran still wins. Iran still comes out of this better than the situation was to begin with for them. Strategically, that is a win.

## **#Nima**

Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he was in the UAE during the war, which was then denied by the government in the UAE. They said it didn't happen. What do they need in Israel to put that out right now? They know the tensions between Iran and the UAE. What do they need from that, that they have to announce that Benjamin Netanyahu was in the UAE? We know what has happened from the intelligence on the Iranians. You look at the Iranian media—they're basically talking about how Israeli troops and air defense systems were in the UAE, trying to defend the UAE and then launch attacks from the UAE on Iran. They know all of that. But why does Netanyahu need to put out that he was in the UAE during the war, announcing that, when it was denied by the government? They know what the atmosphere in the region is. It's totally against Israel.

## **#Anthony**

Mm-hmm. No, I mean, it's—the way I see that, you know, we had the story break that Netanyahu had visited and was on the ground visiting the UAE during this period of conflict, to the point where even Israel released the flight plan to be like, look, we were definitely there and flew back, and Netanyahu was there. The UAE is Israel's mistress, and Israel is ready to show the world that they are their mistress because it gives them the ability to say, look, we're not in this alone. The UAE is still very much in the position of saying, like, oh, we want to keep this a secret. And it's no longer a secret.

So the UAE—are they strengthening ties directly with Israel? Yes. Do they yet want that to be known to the region? No. Are they going to try to balance that between what can we get, what can we conceal, how much can we play this off and undersell it before this becomes something that we're

ready to put a ring on, so to speak? So it's clear that in that relationship, Israel is ready to show the advantage of the overt relationship, and the UAE is not yet ready to show that card. We're seeing that conflict. And this is exactly what this conflict will continue to expose in the region—our alliances and transactional relationships, who's on whose side.

Just yesterday, Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee even clearly stated that the Gulf nations need to decide whose side they're on—one side or the other. And that is true, that the Gulf nations will have to decide what side they're on. And I think for a while, as they explore these relationships of whose side we're on, there's going to be a little bit of courting, there's going to be a little bit of dating, like, you know, which way do we want to go with this? So the UAE is certainly in a precarious position based on their geography and their politics.

And now that they're no longer a member of OPEC, Qatar is certainly in a very precarious situation because of their proximity to Iran. But U.S. Central Command Forward Headquarters is there and is considering leaving. U.S. Central Command Headquarters Forward in Qatar is considering moving to Israel. That's going to leave Qatar wide open—no reason for the U.S. to help defend Qatar when we're no longer there. We defend Qatar because of our base. So yeah, a lot of leaders in the region are looking at who is going to be our partner when the smoke settles and who we need to side with. And right now, I would say that there are arguments for both. And I think that what we're going to see is, more and more, these nations will side with Iran.

## **#Nima**

What is the situation with American bases, considering the new reports coming out in various outlets? Not only CNN—we had other mainstream media outlets, the Wall Street Journal talking about it, other outlets. What is your assessment of American bases in GCC countries today?

## **#Anthony**

Well, the word I will use is decimated. And people will say, oh, certainly they're not wiped off the map. Well, there are still remnants, but they're decimated. When you look at the Fifth Fleet of the U.S. Navy in Bahrain, we know that it took heavy fire and devastation to the point where Navy personnel had to move into hotels and then evacuate. In Qatar, CENTCOM does still maintain a presence, but it is more limited than it was before. A lot of the CENTCOM Headquarters Forward personnel are in Israel right now at Site 66. It's just south of Ashdod, near Ashkelon.

So we're already moving U.S. forces out of one of our most prominent forward bases in Qatar to Israel, with plans to move U.S. Central Command Headquarters Forward into Israel. That's a big move, but it's happening. In Kuwait, you have Camp Arifjan. That's the headquarters of U.S. Army Central. We've evacuated a lot of personnel from there, and a lot of it has been hit and rendered inoperable. You also have Camp Buehring, which is in Kuwait, which we use for staging in the region, where we also have the forces of Operation Spartan Shield, which is a large armored unit

that we maintain in reserve to respond to a land war, which now has elements that have had to be moved, and we've lost that strategic foothold.

So when you look at Arifjan, when you look at Buehring, when you look at our base in Bahrain, when you look at the base in Qatar, when you look at our footprint throughout the region, how we've reduced and moved, yeah, we have basically – we've basically – and for all lack of better terms, we vacated and we left some folks back to kind of keep the lights burning. But those too – there's really not a lot to grip onto. There's really not a lot to hold onto. And to go back in and rebuild to make those the way that they were before the war will cost billions that the U.S. doesn't have.

## **#Nima**

How does that influence, you know, the situation with the American bases, influence the Israelis' ability if the new – let's assume Donald Trump gets back to the United States and decides to attack Iran again? A new round of war happening, as Benjamin Netanyahu was asking for during his interview on 60 Minutes. Let's assume that. How do you see the situation in Israel? We know somehow, with these videos, footage is coming out from, you know, from Lebanon. We've seen some sort of footage from Hezbollah. But overall, looking at the defense capabilities of Israel today, how do you find them?

## **#Anthony**

Well, we do know that their defense capability with the Iron Dome and the interceptor capability of David's Sling, which is an integrated component of the Iron Dome, have been degraded. We know that. In the systems, in the coverage, in the radar, in the munitions, they are going to have to be much more selective in how they use the Iron Dome than they have in the past. But for the United States to leave from its bases in the region and to centralize into Israel plays right into Netanyahu's hands. Because when you have now, if you move U.S. Central Command forward to Israel, let's say to Site 66 or expand that into Be'er Sheva, where there's a large base possible.

Let's say that the remnants of the Fifth Fleet, maybe you keep a small element in Bahrain that you can quickly get out, but you move them to, let's say, Haifa or Ashdod or Ashkelon with access to the Mediterranean, where the fleet can then move through the Suez Canal. Then you have the Yemen problem. But to move those bases to Israel plays directly into Netanyahu's plan, because then the United States is going to defend its resources in the region, which means bringing in from where we had THAAD systems, Patriot systems, interceptors, ATACMS, GMLRS, HIMARS. We now move all those into Israel and protect Israel to protect us.

And that is exactly what Netanyahu wants, because now if there are strikes against Israel and it kills an American, that then heightens the U.S. involvement. That's another red line. So in terms of this, it plays directly into Netanyahu's hands. Does Netanyahu really have any strong desire in actuality to

reduce reliance on the United States? No. But it serves him well to say that, given the political climate in the United States right now with the rejection of billions of dollars to Israel. So he was on 60 Minutes in the U.S. Of course, he's going to say that. Let's see what he says in the Knesset next week. Let's see what he says in Hebrew. That's always a different conversation, or that's a different message, right? So let's wait to hear what that is.

But then also, um, I think Netanyahu realizes that Donald Trump is going to be the last pro-Israel president. He realizes that Donald Trump is the last president that he can manipulate and control. And things after Donald Trump really go in a different direction for Israel. And I think that they're already looking to other bedfellows, such as India. We know that. And like a, you know, a symbiotic relationship where you have the host and you have the, you know, the leech in a way. Israel knows that the blood is running dry, and they have to start looking for another host. And could that be India? I think it could be. We see the inroads they're making in. But there's certainly some benefit to also pulling in the UAE, which they're clearly doing.

So if you look at this, you know, for anybody that's ever played the game of Risk and you have all your pieces on the board throughout, right now, those pieces that you see that are moving in towards Israel or influences that are being extended are all for Netanyahu's plans to, one, maintain conflict and chaos. We know that Netanyahu, for his own political survival and to keep himself out of jail, wants to continue war. What better way to do that than to bring in U.S. forces in Israel to then have incidents to keep war happening? And then you have the perfect alibi because you have America there with you to say, oh, we didn't do it, they did. It's exactly what they did with the IDF in Gaza. Oh, we didn't do that, the U.S. did it. So it's all part of Netanyahu's plan. And again, we'll see next week when he speaks in the Knesset and it's in Hebrew. Let's see what he says, because it will be different from what he said to an English audience on 60 Minutes.

## **#Nima**

He said that Israel wants to be independent of the United States. And when he was asked about the timeline for that, he said in the next 10 years. Do you see that happening anytime soon between the United States and Israel?

## **#Anthony**

I do think with the U.S. political climate and the turning against things like AIPAC and other manipulative politics that continue to stand for the funding of Israel, that it will change. Will it cut off? Will the tap run dry? Probably not. But it will reduce quite a bit. It will. What does guarantee at least the continuation of that in the short to midterm is having U.S. basing in Israel. And really, when you look at how that might start looking for Trump, we're pulling bases out of Germany or pulling personnel out of Germany and Poland. We know that. That's happening. We've removed soldiers and presence from a lot of these bases in the GCC. We know that.

So if we were to try to maintain a forward outpost, so to speak, would it make sense geographically, politically, based on what the United States claims Israel's partnership and alliance to be, to put it in Israel? Certainly. Certainly. And that always comes with a lot of benefits, comes with a lot of money, comes with a lot of support. You know, you got to build bases, you got to, you know, all those things that come with it. And that's, you know, the military-industrial complex, it's going to keep turning. And all of that sounds like cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching for Halliburton, Kellogg, Brown & Root, General Dynamics.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Tony, today Admiral Cooper was asked about the targets in Iran. And what do we know about the targets? And here's what he said.

## **#Speaker 03**

The main concern I have, Admiral Cooper, is how we've prosecuted this war to date. We have data and information publicly available in publications like The New York Times that 22 schools have been hit, hospitals, dozens of hospitals have been hit. We have regulations. We have the law of war. We have human rights obligations. We have our own targeting requirements to avoid civilian harm and death. Have you been implementing all the laws that are required under current law to minimize civilian death?

## **#Speaker 04**

Senator, we have executed every operation consistent with the law of armed conflict. The subject of civilian casualties is a particular passion of mine. We pay attention to it. We follow all the procedures and have gone above and beyond to, in my case, personally warn the Iranian people in several instances during conflict where they were being potentially used as human shields.

## **#Speaker 03**

If they've been warned, how did we then bomb 22 schools?

## **#Speaker 04**

There is no indication that we have that has been corroborated.

## **#Speaker 03**

How many schools have we bombed?

## **#Speaker 04**

There is one active civilian casualty investigation from the 13,629 munitions used.

### **#Speaker 03**

So how do you explain the publicly available information that 22 schools and multiple hospitals have been hit?

### **#Speaker 04**

There's no way that we can corroborate that. No indication of that whatsoever, Senator.

### **#Speaker 03**

There's no way you can corroborate it, or no indication of it? Which one?

### **#Speaker 04**

No indication.

### **#Speaker 03**

Well, the indication is what's publicly available. There is an indication. Have you investigated those claims?

### **#Speaker 04**

We have not.

### **#Nima**

Yeah, you see what is happening. But do you think that, is there anybody, you know, we know that sooner or later they're going to have some sort of investigation. We're going to see a statement from the Iranian government talking about it in some sort of international court, and they're going to do it. And there has to be some sort of investigation. I think it goes all the way up to Pete Haksat. It's not just about how he has been in charge of these sorts of attacks. Because what is your understanding of what's going on right now in the United States with Admiral Cooper talking this way? It seems that there is no investigation going on within the administration about the targets and how the war has been going on during those, you know, 40, 39 days of war.

### **#Anthony**

Well, what I would like to say directly to Admiral Brad Cooper, and when this gets posted, perhaps someone can tag U.S. CENTCOM, is that you are going to prison. Whether it's this administration—

probably not—but in the next administration, it is clear that under your command, we have committed atrocious war crimes. Admiral Cooper's political speak and double-mouth talk of indications or corroboration or "we didn't know"—we knew. It's a lie. He is lying. We absolutely know that in the conduct of these strikes, we have hit schools and hospitals, including on the 28th of February, the Manav Girls' School.

We know that. And someone will be held responsible. And if Brad Cooper thinks that Donald Trump or Pete Hegseth are going to jump on that grenade, he's lying to himself. And Dan Cain, the chairman, he can go, "Well, I didn't order it." This is all going to fall on Brad Cooper's shoulders. And while he has time this weekend, while he's in Florida, before he heads back to Qatar, I recommend, or maybe on the flight, watch \*Nuremberg\*. "I was just following orders" is not an excuse. He will be in prison. He is lying, and Congress sees it clearly.

## **#Nima**

Tony, do you see, you know, Pete Hegseth's sort of attitude with this war is totally different, at least from the previous administrations? Because he says, obviously he says, that we're going to go, we're going to kill, we're going to hit the target, we don't care about the target, we have to intimidate the enemy. And this is the new policy. Where does it come from? Is that coming from the Israelis? Because nobody heard that before from the head of the Pentagon talking this way. It's unbelievable when you see the head of the Pentagon. It's a huge responsibility on his part, in my opinion.

## **#Anthony**

Well, yes, that's why... What's important for Americans and for the world to understand is that whenever Pete Hegseth opens his mouth, he's not Pete Hegseth. He is the Secretary of Defense. He drives policy. He drives orders. He drives the way that this war is being persecuted and prosecuted. There is no, "Well, I just said that as Pete, not as the SecDef." There's no difference. Very similar to when I was in Syria in 2018 and Donald Trump tweeted, "We're leaving Syria," and some people were like, "Oh, you know, it's just Don tweeting." No, he is the President of the United States. That's an order. And guess what?

We ended up jumping through our butt to try to get out of Syria because of that tweet. So when you see what's driving the policies, and I think it's interesting to look when you listen to Pete Hegseth talk, it's almost as if every time he speaks and he's talking about what the United States is doing, he always catches himself. It's not organic. It's like someone in the crowd is looking at him to remind him, or it's in a note that he sees—oh, remember to say this. He always catches himself: "Oh, and Israel. Oh, and Israel." So it's very clear to me that this is the tail wagging the dog, and that wagger is Israel.

## **#Nima**

Tony, before wrapping up, the case of Syria for many people is confusing because in Syria, we had the fall of Bashar al-Assad, who was the worst enemy, as Benjamin Netanyahu said over and over—that Assad must go. We had Obama saying that, Clinton saying that, everybody saying Assad must go. And finally, we have Assad gone and, you know, the new guy, HTS, head chopper in Damascus. What is the problem right now between Syria and Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israelis, that every time they're attacking, bombing somewhere in Syria?

## **#Anthony**

Well, yeah, you look at the U.S. still has quite a significant footprint as well in northeast Syria. So you really kind of have to see the politics, the geography, and the situation in Syria bifurcated between what's southwest of the Euphrates and what's northeast of the Euphrates. You really have northeast Syria and southwest Syria. And when you look at northeast Syria, you have a lot of influence from Turkey down to the M4 corridor, which is the major highway that crosses the Fishkhabour Bridge into Syria across the country. But then you have U.S. forces spread throughout.

You have Russian forces in the Lafarge concrete factory up in the northwest corner where the Euphrates flows into Syria, or where the Euphrates crosses, I should say, Turkey. So you've got a lot going on in northeast Syria that the government of Syria doesn't really control. And then in southwest Syria, you primarily have the Badia Desert, and then you have Damascus and the large urban areas. And so when you look at that, I think that as part of Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's Pax Judaica, what some people call Greater Israel, from the Golan Heights, from Sheba Farms of the Golan Heights all the way up to the Euphrates River of Syria, is in that blueprint.

So right now is the time, with the war in Iran, with the world looking the other way, with so much else going on, for Netanyahu to press into Lebanon, which clearly he's doing, continue to hold firm in the Golan Heights, criminalize, victimize, demonize any opportunity he can for a military incursion into Syria, for whatever reason or purpose it might be. Um, but I think Netanyahu is looking for that. And, um, so right now, again, whenever there's chaos, confusion, and conflict is when Israel looks to capitalize. Is that certainly the case in southwest Syria? It certainly is. So this is another situation that is ripe for Israel to start influencing. I think we're going to start seeing more of that, especially with the Golan Heights. That's always been a point of contention, and I think that we're going to see more of that coming into the news.

## **#Nima**

Tony, you see Israel today and what it was before the war started. Considering all the changes that have happened so far in the Middle East, how is it going to be perceived by Israelis? I know that you were there, you talked with officials there, with society there. How do they feel, in your opinion, right now compared to the way they were before the war started?

## **#Anthony**

Well, I think that what we see on the news or in the media is one thing. I've been there. And what I think Israel suffers from right now is the majority—I wouldn't say down to every last person—but the majority is a very sick and manipulated society. When you have members of society sit on a hill in Sderot and eat sandwiches and drink sodas and laugh and take selfies as bombs are dropped on Gaza, killing women and children, and you celebrate that... In Ashkelon, there is a sports bar that has TVs with live video footage from the cameras that the IDF have in Gaza, watching like you would go and watch a sports game of the bombing and the shooting.

And that people are in there with their tiki drinks out on the beach or in the bar watching this like it's TV. It is a sick society. And when you look at the expansion and how much of Israeli society wants to keep the current power in power or to continue—I mean, right now we've got the infamous Jonathan Pollard, who was a spy, who the United States held in prison, who during this war was released back to Israel at the behest of the U.S. ambassador, who is now running for the Knesset, and one of his primary campaign points is to take over all of Gaza. So this is not something that you can necessarily say Israeli society is innocent in, or that they're just under the control of their government. And again, this is not every single Israeli, but Israeli society is sick.

**#Nima**

Thank you so much, Tony, for being with us today. Great pleasure, as always.

**#Anthony**

As always, I appreciate it.

**#Nima**

See you soon.

**#Anthony**

Thank you.

**#Nima**

Bye bye.

**#Anthony**

Thank you.