

Scott Ritter: Europe Attacked Russia - Retaliation Is Now Unavoidable

Scott Ritter is a former Major, Intelligence Officer, US Marine, and UN Weapons Inspector. Ritter discusses how Europe has now crossed the line and made a Russian retaliation inevitable. Follow Prof. Glenn Diesen: Substack: <https://glennDiesen.substack.com/> X/Twitter: https://x.com/Glenn_Diesen Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/glenndiesen> Support the research by Prof. Glenn Diesen: PayPal: <https://www.paypal.com/paypalme/glenndiesen> Buy me a Coffee: [buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng](https://www.buymeacoffee.com/gdieseng) Go Fund Me: <https://gofund.me/09ea012f> Books by Prof. Glenn Diesen: <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B09FPQ4MDL>

#Glenn

Welcome back. We are joined today by Scott Ritter, a former UN weapons inspector, a US Marine Corps intelligence officer, and a prolific author. So thank you very much for coming on the program. We appear to be entering very dangerous times. That is, the attacks on Russia are now intensifying. We saw massive drone attacks on Moscow over the weekend. And before we logged on now, I saw that drones were also entering the space around St. Petersburg, very far away from Ukraine, I would add, to the extent they had to shut down many of the flights going out of Pulkovo. To what extent is the West involved in these attacks?

#Scott Ritter

Let's make it absolutely clear. If it wasn't for Western involvement, these attacks would not be taking place. The technologies being used are developed by the West for Ukraine. The intelligence information is provided exclusively by the West for Ukraine. The manufacturing is done outside of Ukraine to avoid Russian interdiction. Again, this is not an example of Ukraine escalating against Russia. This is the collective West escalating against Russia. This is a reflection of the reality that, you know, NATO is actively engaged, or NATO nations are actively engaged, in combat operations against Russia. That is basically, you know, achieving an existential threat to the survival of Russia.

#Glenn

Well, let's see. In Europe, there's a lot of talk about the need to bring the war to Russia. There's a lot of talk about mass-producing long-range weapons to strike Russia. I guess, when did they cross the point where, for Russia, doing nothing is more dangerous than hitting back? I guess because we seem to be crossing this. Well, if we haven't already, we would cross it fairly soon, it seems.

#Scott Ritter

No, it's been crossed a long time ago. You have major Western nations—Germany, France, Great Britain, and others—openly articulating the necessity to engage Russia in open armed conflict by the end of this decade, 2029, 2030. We now have Pistorius, the defense minister of Germany, openly saying that Russia is our enemy and we need to prepare to go to war. Now they're preparing the weapons of war specifically to conduct long-range strike missions inside Russia. So, I mean, again, I'm not a Russian leader, and there's a good reason why I'm not. A, I'm American, and B, you wouldn't want me to be your leader because we'd be at war with Europe right now. I'd be launching preemptive strikes. I'd be taking out production facilities. I'd be destroying decision-making centers, and I'd be implementing in full effect the Karaganov Doctrine.

#Glenn

Well, it appears so that—yeah, it's very strange if you listen to the rhetoric four years ago, the caution and something that sounded like rational arguments and concern about being participants in the war, where the rhetoric now is very far apart. But a lot of these attacks on Russia now appear—no, appear, they were evidently so—have gone through the Baltic states. Then we see, especially in Estonia and Latvia, of course, they have to transit through Lithuania as well if this is going to work. But we also heard some statements from the Russian foreign intelligence services arguing that Ukraine is preparing strikes on Russia from Latvian territory. I mean, once the Russians make these statements, aren't they committing to something? Because if they say, “We know it's happening from Latvia, but we're not going to do anything,” it seems that this will become an impossibility.

#Scott Ritter

Well, yes, I think it's gone beyond the concept of a possibility to a probability, and maybe even an absolute certainty. I think Latvia is being marked for death. I don't believe Russia—again, I don't pretend to know anything about the—well, I do know Sergei Karaganov, you know Sergei Karaganov, and you know that he's a serious man. He's a rational actor. He's not an irrational actor. And he's somebody whose voice has influence. And Sergei Karaganov and others like him who advise, or whose opinions are heeded by the Ministry of Defense and the Russian leadership, have articulated a very sound, rational case for Russian military intervention—decisive. I don't believe these people who speak of Russian military intervention are playing the game of managed escalation. I think we're beyond that.

The reason why we're where we're at—and I don't blame Vladimir Putin. He was a genius and still is a genius. You know, he has been managing the escalation ladder in perfect form, because never once prior to, you know, this most recent election era in this war, did Ukraine pose an existential threat to the security of Russia. It was always the potential. But we know that the West has been articulating in favor of the strategic defeat of Russia since the beginning of the special military operation. We know this. And we know that they have been pushing Russia, pushing Russia, pushing Russia. Russia sets a red line, it gets crossed. Russia resets the red line, it gets crossed. Now, Russia

resets it for a reason, because the crossing of the red line was done by design to get a Russian overreaction so that the West could mobilize support and solidify support on behalf of Ukraine.

It was Russia's goal and objective to keep the West, you know, from being able to do that. So you don't overreact. You allowed the red lines to be crossed because at the end of the day, it didn't change the, you know, the ultimate calculation. Russia still prevailed on the battlefield. Well, Russia's still prevailing on the battlefield today. The Special Inspector General for Operation Atlantic Resolve has published a report recently that says Russia's dominated across the battle. So all those, you know, pro-Ukrainian social media platforms, just stick it in your ear. You know, the special United States has spoken.

And even that report, you know, is very conservative in terms of, you know, giving a lot of credit to Ukraine and NATO that simply isn't reflected by reality. But their conclusion is that Russia maintains operational and strategic dominance across the spectrum of this conflict. And that's what Russia has been seeking to do—to wear not just Ukraine down, but the collective West down through a war of attrition. And they're still succeeding. But what's happened is, because Russia has allowed the collective West to cross red lines, they've crossed the ultimate red line. Because in the past, you always, as you said, the West always went forward.

We want to avoid being categorized as an active participant in the conflict. We always want to create that air of ambiguity. Well, there's no more ambiguity. They're just straight up doing it, straight up saying it. And now, again, we come to Glenn Diesen. We probably should do a good job of introducing him to a Western audience. This is one of the premier political-military analysts in Russia, a man who has advised Russian presidents from Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin. In 2023, he articulated in writing and spoken word the need for the West to be decisively countered by Russia.

#Scott Ritter

He was in favor of the preemptive use of nuclear weapons, that when the West articulates a strategy calling for the strategic defeat of Russia, Russia has a duty and responsibility to respond and nip this in the bud before it manifests itself in something that does real harm to Russia. And he famously said that his calculation is that no American leader will trade Boston for Poznan, meaning Russia could just take out a Polish city with a nuclear weapon and Europe will do nothing. It'll intimidate Europe, and the United States will do nothing because they don't want to trade Boston for Poznan. Vladimir Putin came out immediately and said, I don't agree with Sergei Karaganov. That's not who we are. That's not what we do.

In 2024, as the West continued to push, he appointed Sergei Karaganov to be the head of the review process for the Kremlin's strategic nuclear posture review. In 2025, the Russians published a new strategic nuclear posture that basically was the Karaganov Doctrine, basically saying that if nuclear powers provide conventional military capability to a non-nuclear power and use that to strike into the strategic depth of Russia, threatening Russia's strategic infrastructure, then Russia is

therefore empowered to use nuclear weapons in response. They can treat this as a nuclear attack. That's exactly what's happening. People need to understand that this doctrine was published last year. It was covered yesterday. We talked about it. Everybody talked about it.

Everybody knew this. And yet the West is doing something now that just flagrantly crosses that red line because they believe Russia is bluffing. And so now they've crossed the red line, and Ukraine is doubling down because Ukraine smells blood. Ukraine is dying. And for the first time, Ukraine's going, wait a minute, we're doing real harm here. Let's keep doing it. Let's keep doing it because they want NATO to become engaged. That's their goal. That's their salvation. And so Ukraine is just doubling down, doubling down, doubling down, throwing caution to the wind. You know, in a week and a half's time, the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum opens up. This is like the premier—it's bigger than Davos. Everybody in the West knows Davos.

St. Petersburg International Economic Forum swamps it. It's bigger, more participants, more money, more everything. You think the Russians are going to let Ukrainian drones come out of the Baltics and threaten Russia? You think that's going to happen? You think they're going to let this happen? No, not at all. I see nothing but bad things, bad tidings. I think the West has gone too far. I think there will be hell to pay. I don't know if Russia limits it to Latvia. If I were the Russians, I wouldn't. I would take out the production facilities in England, in Germany, in Denmark, all identified production facilities associated with the FPV and other drones. I would take out German companies involved in guidance and control. And I would even take out Ramstein. Maybe not. Maybe that's an American base.

But I would threaten to take out Ramstein and follow on attack where the intelligence is gathered and disseminated. But the West has to be struck a blow. And I would eliminate Kiev once and for all. I think it's time to find out what a dozen Iskanders can do to downtown Kiev. I think it's time to show the Ukrainians that that's the fate of all of your cities if you want to continue this war. Russia, Vladimir Putin said on May 9th that he wants this war to wrap up. A lot of people went, oh, that's a sign of Russian weakness. Russia's willing. No, it's a sign of Russian recognition of their strength. And it's time to flex their muscles. The day of restraint, I believe, is over. I believe we're moving to a very dangerous period because now we get to answer the question of what will the United States do when Russia strikes a NATO country? How will Article 5 be treated?

#Glenn

I spoke to Karaganov last week, and he was on this program, and he was making the point that in the past he was representing a small minority who said it's time to retaliate directly against the Europeans. But now he says he represents the overwhelming majority. So you already had all this pressure building up on the Kremlin that, you know, they had to choose a different path, this dilemma. Do they retaliate against NATO and risk going up the escalation ladder, or do they look the other way and risk emboldening NATO? They always went with the second option, but now the pressure was mounting so much.

And just at this point, when all this pressure is mounting on Putin to take a harder line, we see these massive drone attacks and just uncontrolled celebrations in Europe. And this is what's so concerning. It's as if they don't see what's coming next. I mean, you know, they use all these terms like "because bad for Russia, they think is good for us." Before, you used this term that, you know, the people online, the pro-Ukrainian bloggers or social media activists—it's not even pro-Ukrainian. If Ukraine had implemented the Minsk Agreement or anything like this, which they always opposed, Ukraine would be intact now. These people are destroying Ukraine. It's quite insane.

My concern is what the Europeans are celebrating now, which is that the attacks on Russia are having a growing impact on Russian security. They seem to be making a significant dent in the Russian economy. Again, I'm not sure how much, but at least it seems to be enough to create problems for the Russians. And if this is the case, that means the Russians can't afford to look the other way anymore. I don't know. How are you assessing the attacks on Russian energy security or energy? Because, I mean, this is the irony. We should be happy that we weren't making a dent. Once we start making a dent, the calculations seem like they have to change, don't they, on the Russian side?

#Scott Ritter

Last November, I was in Moscow and I interviewed somebody affiliated with the Russian State Duma, involved in the committee on the protection of energy infrastructure from drone attacks. I'm sure it had a more Russian name than that, but he was on it. And I was surprised by the frankness of his conversation. I actually published it on the Russia House. I think many people ignored it at the time because people don't like to dig deep into fact-based reality. They like to live in their little fantasy worlds. I'm going to republish it and ask people to listen to it because it's important what he said at the time. He said that these attacks were taking place, but that the real damage done was minimal, that Russia was able to mitigate the damage and then repair the facilities and bring them back into order.

So, you know, the strategic impact was not – which is why, again, it's not that Karaganov's arguments became – Again, I don't believe Vladimir Putin responds to pressure from Sergei Karaganov or anybody else. That's not how the game plays. And I don't think Sergei Karaganov is promoting himself as a man who has intimidated Putin into changing his mind. Sergei Karaganov has taken a stance. And Vladimir Putin has said, no, the damage being done doesn't rate an overreaction. But now the damage equation has changed. It's not that Sergei Karaganov's arguments, you know, that Putin's been pressured. Putin's a pragmatic guy and he's looking at it. The damage being done now to Ukrainian energy infrastructure is real. And it's not easily mitigated. It's not easily repaired, meaning that when you do this damage, it's long term.

And Russia can't afford long-term damage. You know, again, there are things that happen in Russia that we're not aware of. And again, you know, I believe Russia—the idea that Russia operates on the

margins is absurd. I believe Russia probably has strategic reserves just like everybody else. And I believe that they're able to ride this out because you see a lot of people talking about Russia's export volumes haven't dropped significantly. But the potential for the production of refined products for export is being impacted. At some point in time, the reserves run out. And if you haven't brought this potential back up, you're going to have a gap, and it's going to be meaningful. It's not Vladimir Putin's job to allow Russia to get to the point where you have meaningful impact.

His job is to prevent that from happening. You know, this is my way of answering your question. I believe that between 10 and 20% of Russia's export production capacity has been damaged to an extent beyond that which it was being impacted in November, that this damage will take months to repair, and that if Russia doesn't nip this in the bud now, by the time they repair it and bring it back online, the reserves that are currently carrying them through this process will be depleted. And then you're going to have a real and significant impact. And that's why Russia needs to act now. And I also think that the Ukrainians become more and more emboldened.

You don't want—we know what the consequences of an attack on the Kremlin will be. Fatal for everybody. But if you're a Russian, you don't want the Kremlin attacked. You don't want to wait for that to happen. You see the Ukrainians moving in that direction. This is the direction they are heading. It's inevitable. You see the West backing up. You see the rhetoric and the damage that's being done. This is the moment of decision right now. If you wait, you allow the Ukrainians to do significant, meaningful harm of an existential nature. Right now, Russia has the capacity to absorb, repair, and move on if the threat can be terminated. So now is the moment of decisive action.

And I, again, I don't want to speak on behalf of anybody. It's just assessments. And as we all know, assessments can be wrong. But I have to say, on May 9th, the whole scene around Victory Day was—look, you're a specialist. You lived in Russia. You know the Russians. This was a different May 9th than I've seen in the last four years since the special military operation began. Yeah. This was a May 9th of deadly seriousness. At the embassy, the ambassador spoke incessantly about unconditional surrender, unconditional surrender, unconditional surrender, linking Nazi Germany and the Ukrainian government in a way that had never been done before.

They spoke of Germany as a permanent enemy, not as a former enemy. That we—Germany is the enemy today, is the enemy. This was the language. Dmitry Medvedev, who has always been sort of the bad, crazy cop to Putin's good, sane cop, you know, wrote an article in RT. What's the importance of RT? RT English. It's an article written for the West to read. It's designed for Western consumption. But it's an article that speaks with the force of the Russian government. This is Russian state media. This isn't Medvedev putting a social media post out on X. This is RT, Russian state media, publishing a major article written by a man who used to be the president of Russia, used to be the prime minister of Russia, and currently is the number two on the National Security Council.

And the article is devastating for Europe. It pretty much endorses Karaganov. Karaganov, the day before, had another interview that basically hammered home the same points. The sense I get, having watched Russia, monitored Russia, et cetera, is that Russia has reached the point of decision. And unless something fundamentally changes, such as the unconditional surrender of Ukraine today, I think we're going to see decisive action before the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum begins, to preempt any potential attack. I'd be curious to be a fly on the wall, although that's an insult to the Chinese. I'm sure their sanitation is such that there are no flies on the wall.

But there should be a fly on the wall in the conversations between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping about this, because China was extraordinarily tough on Trump about Taiwan. And the Chinese know that Ukraine is as important to Russia as Taiwan is to China. And so, you know, the Financial Times playing their MI6 stupid mind games, you know, putting out this stuff about how Xi Jinping told Trump that Putin overstepped. I mean, just the simplistic stupidity of this. You know, Andrei Ilitsky, former lieutenant general, advisor to Shoigu when he was minister of defense and the author of the concept of mental warfare. You know, this isn't mental warfare. Mental warfare is actually carefully crafted, designed to get in there, latch in, and rip. What the British did here was just crude and stupid.

And you could immediately see all the corrupted social media outlets that immediately jump on and say, "Aha, aha." I mean, it's just brain-dead people. No, that's not the case at all. But I do believe that this is a very important meeting and that, you know, look, Russia needs China. There's no doubt about that. Russia needs China, and China needs Russia. And there's no doubt in my mind that this meeting may go down in history as sort of the modern-day version, or the present-day version, of the February 4th, 2022 meeting where Vladimir Putin flew to China, to Beijing, met with Xi Jinping on the eve of the initiation of the special military operation. I have a feeling that there will be conversations had that at least allow the Chinese to be positioned for what is about to happen.

#Glenn

That's what I was thinking as well because, well, Trump just left and Putin has arrived in Beijing. And I'm assuming if the Russians are now planning to, well, dramatically change their posture in this war, that they would tell the—well, discuss this at length with the Chinese first. So I'm assuming as well that this is something they're discussing because, again, there is no status quo which they can hold on to. It's not just where they are today, the drone attacks, but the Russians can see exactly what direction this is going. The Chinese can see this.

I think the hatred of Russia in Europe has blinded them completely to what will come next. I mean, this is so predictable—the war we're walking into—and yet, nothing. No debate, no discussion, no dissent, not a squeak. I mean, it's extraordinary. I mean, this must be the most ridiculous world war

we're walking into here, but... I did want to get your thoughts on something, though. That is, the defense minister in Latvia resigned after some... I think the Ukrainian drones were scrambled and they hit some targets within Latvia. What do you make of this situation?

#Scott Ritter

It's hard to know unless you have access to the totality of... I think what happened is there's embarrassment. There can be no doubt that, I mean, you know, there are stupid games played all the time. And plausible deniability is the coin of the realm when it comes to, you know, the official face of governance. But militaries and intelligence services oftentimes engage in covert relationships that are deniable or are supposed to be deniable. I think they got caught with their pants down, and it's an embarrassing situation. And so he paid the price. He was relieved of his position, but the policy is not changing. And again, we don't know the details.

#Glenn

I mean,

#Scott Ritter

You know, they're saying that these are drones that were redirected by the Russians using electronic warfare. The Russians are saying that these drones were in their airspace. I think people have been tracking the drones, and they see there's a definite Baltic corridor. So that's not an invention, that's not imagination. Whether the Russians were clever enough to take control of the drones and target Baltic oil production is another thing. But again, if the Ukrainians weren't using a Baltic corridor, then the Russians wouldn't have to do this. But I think what we're seeing here is that there are political ramifications for being caught in a failed covert policy.

#Glenn

Well, when the Russian Baltic coast was struck, the main argument was, well, they didn't use the Baltic airspace. This is Russian propaganda. But now we kind of turn the page on this because now they're saying, well, yes, they admitted that there were Ukrainian drones over Estonia, Ukrainian drones over Latvia, and again, unavoidably so, then also Russian drones over Estonia. So they're recognizing now that they are using this corridor, but it appears that the new narrative is that, oh, we haven't permitted it and we oppose it. But again, this doesn't make any sense to me.

#Scott Ritter

Just as was the case when the CIA helped the Ukrainians try to attack Russia, Vladimir Putin, in December of 2025, during his famous phone call with Donald Trump—you know, drones are brought down intact, and the guidance package is recovered intact. And Russian intelligence is able to

extract data that proves everything about the targeting. And, you know, when the Ukrainians launch the amount of drones, yes, the Russians are shooting down a lot of drones. But we know that with electronic warfare, for instance, if the Russians can take a drone and redirect it to a target, they can take a drone and land it.

And there's no doubt in my mind that the Russians have recovered intact drones, a number of these drones, and have reverse-engineered the guidance, and they understand exactly the path flown by the drones. And they also, by evaluating the data, can tell where the data came from, what intelligence sources were used, et cetera. So I believe the Russians have a very, very full picture of what's going on, which is why when Naryshkin publishes very pointed intelligence, I think we have to respect the fact that it's probably fact-based, not just rumor, speculation, or disinformation.

#Glenn

Well, just as, you know, they couldn't get more reckless. So we see that out of Lithuania, they're making the comments that we should now put more pressure on the fortress Kaliningrad. And this is, again, Kaliningrad, you know, the enclave, it's stuck and severed from the rest of the Russian Federation. But this still hosts a million Russian civilians. They also host nuclear weapons. But earlier on we had, well, it's been a while now, but the U.S. General Donohue making the point that, oh, we can take Kaliningrad.

All of this rhetoric is essentially about attacking Russia. I mean, how do you make sense of this? Because this is happening at the same time as the British now are trying to lead this naval group to confront the Russians. And I think it's quite predictable that they want to, if not put a full blockade, at least harass Russian ships in the Baltic Sea. So we see the escalation at every level. Do you see Kaliningrad possibly being a flashpoint? I mean, there are so many possible flashpoints now, I guess.

#Scott Ritter

I mean, it could be, because we're talking about insanity. You know, I publicly cautioned General Donohue—not that he would listen to me—but I said the quickest way to ensure that you end up being marked with a stone at Arlington—your body won't be recovered, but there'll be a stone at Arlington—is to attack Kaliningrad, because the Russians will instantly kill you, your command staff, and everybody affiliated with this attack. Yeah. You know, it's just stupid. The Estonians making similar statements, Latvians threatening. I tell you, the quickest way to make Kaliningrad not an enclave is to attack Kaliningrad, because we're going to see the Baltics become Russian again.

And they'll become Russian overnight. You know, that's just the reality of it. If that's the game they want to play, Russia doesn't want to do this. But, you know, Russia's not going to yield on this point. And if it does become a flashpoint, it's a flashpoint that marks the total eradication of the Baltic states, which will be interesting because then what will NATO do? Nothing. They can do nothing. The Baltics have always been this exposed appendage. You know, is Sweden now going to commit

suicide, come in and save the Baltics? The Finns are going to make an attack on the Kola Peninsula and Vyborg to save the Baltics? No, because that would be the end of Finland, and that would be the end of Sweden.

I mean, these nations joined a failing military alliance that has no political viability and zero military capacity to meaningfully project power. I just don't understand, you know, where is the commander of NATO forces telling the military council to tell the yappy Baltic poodles or chihuahuas to shut up? I mean, because the rhetoric is fatal to NATO. If you want to have NATO totally collapse, show that Article 5 is absolutely meaningless. The best way to show that Article 5 is absolutely meaningless is to provoke the Russians. What does the British fleet think they're going to do besides sink? I mean, it's stunning. They all believe Russia is bluffing. They all believe Russia is bluffing. I mean, they misunderstand patience and pragmatism for weakness.

#Glenn

Yeah, no, I also heard the talks that, you know, Medvedev's putting on a show, same as Karaganov, that he's just putting on a show. They really respect, you know, they're really deterred by NATO. But, you know, I don't think this is all for show as well. I've been in Karaganov's office just one-on-one before 2022 when he made the point as well that he doesn't believe that, as you said before, the U.S. would risk New York for Tallinn or something. So... it's not going to happen. So I think this overconfidence that the Russians can be deterred, that they wouldn't dare, I think that they were cautious because it would be a reckless thing to attack a NATO country.

But they kind of put the Russians in a position where it's, yeah, even more reckless not to do anything. And, you know, the idea you mentioned now is that the Russians could take the Baltic states. I'm thinking a little bit about George Kennan. He gave this interview with The New York Times back in '98 when he made the point that, you know, all the people pushing for NATO expansionism — at some point, the Russians are going to have to push back. And he made the prediction that at that point, the NATO expanders will essentially say, ah, look, the Russians have always been imperialist, that's just how they are. And he was making the point that this is flawed — they will respond to what we're doing now.

That was his main argument. I feel now it's the same thing. That is, the Baltic states, you know, for the past four years have been saying, oh, the Russians might march on, you know, Paris, or, you know, after they're done with Ukraine, they'll invade Latvia. You know, I always made the point that that's ridiculous. No one in Russia wants to go into Latvia. But now it doesn't look so ridiculous anymore. I don't think they want to annex that territory. It sounds like a mess. But I do think that they will strike it, probably. I mean, I think we crossed that boundary as well. There's no coming back from this. Even if we stopped here and pulled back a bit, you know, we're going to continue to plow forward.

#Scott Ritter

Yeah, I agree. I mean, you know, which one is it — Estonia that has the large Russian population, or Latvia?

#Glenn

They both have about, well, a significant, I think, 20%. This is in those countries, but they also have the strictest laws where the ethnic Russians or Russian speakers can't hold government office, they don't get voting rights, so they're kind of second-rate citizens. And the whole argument when they were joining NATO and the EU in 2004 was, oh, Russia would be happy because, you know, the EU and NATO stand for human rights, so now the Russians should be reassured that the Russian minority will get rights. But again, we're now 22 years later, and nothing has been done. So yeah, no, I think, well, there's a higher concentration, I think, in a specific region in Estonia, so if they would at Narva, but yeah.

#Scott Ritter

I just think that, you know, they should study the history of the special military operation and understand the difference between Rossiya and Russkiy, between Slavic Russian people and the Russian nation, and understand that in Estonia, it's both Russkiy and Rossiya, and you're playing with fire. I mean, you're giving the Russians the excuse, right? To do something that otherwise they wouldn't do. Yeah, again, I'm nervous.

#Glenn

I don't know about you, I'm a little nervous.

#Scott Ritter

I don't want to test Karaganov's thesis. I don't want to test it because I know the outcome. I believe Karaganov's right that the United States will not sacrifice Boston or New York for Poznan or another city. But the United States can't allow Russia to create a new paradigm of nuclear deterrence where you have one power not only possessing nuclear weapons, but having demonstrated the capacity to use nuclear weapons. The other power can't sit there passively and be the same way. They must use nuclear weapons too. And then the United States now has carte blanche to use nuclear weapons against Iran. And we will, because the precedent has been set by Russia. And once we begin these exchanges, it doesn't stop until there's a general exchange and we're all dead. This is the flaw. I call it the fallacy — the Karaganov fallacy.

#Glenn

I don't want to test it.

#Scott Ritter

I mean, you know, Sergei Karaganov is a man I respect. I'm sure you respect him as well. His intellectual capacity is prodigious and somewhat intimidating sometimes. So, you know, I don't want to claim that I'm smarter than he is, but on the issue of nuclear war, nuclear weapons, I am experienced. And my gut feeling, and as an experienced analyst you sort of go with your gut feeling on occasion, is that there's no containing nuclear weapons once they're used. Once they're used, whether it takes months, years, a decade, eventually we're going to have a general nuclear exchange that takes out all of humanity. And I'd prefer that not to happen, which means I'd prefer no Russian conventional strikes. I'd prefer peace. I'd prefer sanity. But the West has basically punted on that one. So here we are.

#Glenn

And I always make that point as well. What's going to kill us all is the delusion of escalation control. Once we do what we're doing now, the belief that, well, we can just escalate a little bit more, a little bit more. If the Russians don't care for it, maybe we'll take a little step back and then push forward again. I think this is the dangerous delusion. We're going to lose control over this very quickly. And that should be the lesson of Iran as well, by the way, that you can't go back to the status quo, essentially. Yeah.

#Scott Ritter

Marco Rubio needs to learn that lesson. But as you said, I wish we could go back to Barbara Tuchman's book. Was it **The March of Folly** that she wrote, or **The Guns of August**? I think **The March of Folly**, about basically the summer of 1914. Nobody believed that—they all believed it was containable, that it wasn't, that you'd just have a little conflict with Serbia. It wasn't going to be a big deal. Don't worry about it. Next thing you know, you have a world war that just got out of control. And I think that's where we're at right now. I mean, Trump's in desperate—You know, one of the problems we have here is that Trump is not a rational actor. He's already been humiliated by Iran. Can he really withstand another humiliation? You know, again, these are theses I don't want tested. I don't want to test these. But unfortunately, I think we're going to test them.

#Glenn

Well, so you assume it's very likely, if not guaranteed now, that the Russians will retaliate. How do you see them going up this escalation ladder? Will they go with incrementalism or go in hard, essentially? Because they could do something with plausible deniability, that is, sending in Ukrainian drones, say, essentially, before they can do a conventional strike. I mean, they can do a tactic. I don't think a tactical nuke is—you know, that would be far, far up the escalation ladder. But how do

you see them retaliating? Or what would you expect? I mean, there's no Russian playbook, as people say, so it's not necessarily one thing that's true. But what do you think might be possible escalation strategies? Yeah.

#Scott Ritter

I believe that I have to take off my military hat, because my military hat says, you know, if you're going to do this, do it decisively. I do believe that Putin will allow for escalation management, but the initial blows will be decisive. I think that Kyiv will be eliminated, and Bankova. And I believe that a Baltic state will be struck decisively. You hear the rhetoric—the decision-making centers have already been identified. So I believe that an example will be set of a Baltic state, a decisive example. And then I think there will be, you know, very little wiggle room, meaning zero tolerance for Western retaliation. Any effort at Western retaliation will bring the full weight of the Russian military response.

Um, but I do believe that, you know, I don't believe German factories are going to be hit in the first wave. I don't believe, you know, UK factories. I think that that will be left for, you know, a follow-on wave if necessary. But, um, I do think that Russia will have to put a marker down and that it won't be just one or two attacks. I think if they hit a Baltic state, they will eliminate the Baltic state because you have to send a signal. You have to say, "There but for the grace of God go you. This is the future of Germany." And I do think that it's time for a rationing to be unveiled in all of its awful, horrific reality. No single attacks anymore—concentrated, erratic attacks, the way the weapon was designed to create nuclear-type devastation in the urban area. And the West needs to see this.

#Glenn

It's so incredibly depressing. Do you think there's any possibility now that we're kind of reaching or have reached a point where we're likely going into a direct war with Russia, or Russia will at least retaliate in a big way? Do you think there's any possibility for a diplomatic path? I mean, what do you make of what the EU is doing now? Because, you know, they're discussing, you know, should we talk to the Russians? Who should talk to the Russians? What should we talk about? What do you make of this? I...

#Scott Ritter

I don't see any hope in the EU in the short term maturing to the degree necessary for diplomatic intervention to be meaningful at this stage. Because at the same time they're speaking of diplomatic intervention, their militaries are talking about war. You need to shut down the war. I do believe that China provides a very important diplomatic possibility — that China, after Putin leaves China, will be able to contact Trump because there is connectivity there. And China will be able to contact the European Union and put them on notice that this isn't a bluff. This is the real deal. You have no choice but to change the way you're going, or else the consequences will be devastating. So I do think there's still a window of opportunity, but the United States needs something to jump-start it.

And, you know, right now we don't have effective measures one-on-one with Putin. I think if China intervenes, then Trump may call Putin, Putin may call Trump, and pressure could be placed on Europe. And I'm hoping that that's the case. I'm hoping the United States puts Europe on notice that if they continue down this path, the United States will not be there for them, that this is their problem and they need to stop this right now. And the United States also needs to basically tell Ukraine, it's over. It's finished. You're done. Whether Trump can do that, like I said, if he had won Iran, maybe he'd have some political capital to spend, but he's a very weakened man. I don't see him being able to take two defeats at once, but the smart thing to do would be to stop this path toward war, because that's what we're on.

We're literally on a path toward the kind of war that I trained to fight as a young Marine. I mean, this is the war I trained to fight. And so I'm fully aware of what this kind of war means and what the consequences are if we ever cross that line of departure. Nobody in the military today, unfortunately — they've all aged out. My generation is done. We don't have, if there's any, we don't have any real Cold Warriors left. So they don't know what the Cold War was. They don't know what the Soviet Union was. They don't know what it was like to be prepared to, you know, fight large-scale ground combat in Europe that involved nuclear weapons. We're getting ready to experience that today. And I just wish people would listen.

#Glenn

Yeah, it's kind of sad that seemingly the only thing that can stop a war now is Trump calling the Europeans and telling them, you know, if you decide to continue this, escalate the war in Russia, you're on your own. They will hit back, and we're not going to help you. I mean, if the future of the world is in the hands of Trump, we might all be, yeah, bro, let's screw it already. I just wish we had some more responsible people. And that goes for the Europeans as well. You mentioned the crazy Baltic states. I mean, this was the main idea, I think, in 2022 — that once they decided, okay, we will essentially boycott diplomacy, we'll make weapons, we'll be the path to peace.

That's when the EU thought it was a great idea to hand over the car keys to the most radical elements — that is, you know, Kaja Kallas, for example, out of Estonia. I mean, it's very hard to walk this back and suddenly demand common sense out of her. So no, I think, I don't know, I'm not very optimistic anymore. But yeah, I haven't packed my bags yet, but it seems like we're getting pretty close now. So it's very, yeah, again, so depressing we ended up here. And you don't get the impression — or you get the impression there's someone in Europe, though, who's understanding the severity of this situation — because all I see is applause in the media.

Oh, look, look how much, how bad they hit the Russians. Yeah, you're winning. Ukraine is winning. And nobody ever defined what exactly "winning" means in a war against the world's largest nuclear power, who considers this to be an existential threat. No one. There are no discussions, just this ridiculous tribalism — the idea that, oh, if they're losing, that means we're winning. This is the extent

of their logic. It would be like a goal of defeating America with drone warfare out of Mexico. Like, you don't want to win this war, you don't want to bring too much pain — it's suicide. But, um, yeah, here we are. Anyways, any final thoughts? No, I mean, um...

#Scott Ritter

Yeah, I'm not religious, but pray for peace. Pray for something. Hope something happens. But also keep doing what you're doing, Glenn, because you are... You know, the interviews you have have a meaningful impact. I take a look — you're interviewing the right people, you're asking the right questions, you're getting the right conversations, and it's resonating across the intellectual aspect of the World Wide Web. You know, we know that independent media that's internet-based oftentimes has zero quality control and it brings out the worst in us, but you bring out the best in terms of intellectual development of complex ideas.

Just keep doing what you're doing because, you know, you and I can't solve all the world's problems. We don't have the capacity to make decisions. But I can guarantee you that what you say, and maybe what I say sometimes, and what you get other people to say resonates in certain circles that do have the ability to advise on policy. So yeah, don't just pray because praying is passive. Keep doing what you're doing. And for all your supporters out there, keep supporting Glenn because you're one of the more important voices out there.

#Glenn

Well, thank you. And yeah, I hope it does make a difference. So thanks again for taking the time.

#Scott Ritter

Okay, thanks. Have a good day.