

Israel rigs a race - Max on Judge Napolitano

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#Judge Napolitano

Undeclared wars are commonplace. Tragically, our government engages in preemptive war, otherwise known as aggression, with no complaints from the American people. Sadly, we have become accustomed to living with the illegitimate use of force by the government. To develop a truly free society, the issue of initiating force must be understood and rejected.

#Judge Napolitano

What if sometimes, to love your country, you had to alter or abolish the government? What if Jefferson was right? What if that government is best which governs least? What if it is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong? What if it is better to perish fighting for freedom than to live as a slave? What if freedom's greatest hour of danger is now?

#Judge Napolitano

Hi, everyone. Judge Andrew Napolitano here for Judging Freedom. Today is Wednesday, May 20, 2026. Max Blumenthal joins us now. So on the same day, it's a pleasure, my dear friend, on the same day that the government announced that it entered into a deal with the head of the government not to investigate or audit any of his tax returns, even though many of them were in the middle of an audit, the president mumbled something about the war's end and the stock market set a record. How long can some nonsense like this last? Or who made the profits from it as it happened?

#Max

Well, how long can it last? Is that the question? Yeah, I think we've got another three years of this. And looking at the race in Kentucky, Trump is seeing that as kind of a mandate to continue this kind of behavior and do everything he can to insulate his family mafia and his cronies from accountability after this reign of unprecedented corruption ends. I mean, it's gotten so bad that Hunter Biden is actually on a kind of de facto national speaking tour launched on the Candace Owens show, because at this moment, compared to Donald Trump Jr., he looks like Ralph Nader.

#Judge Napolitano

He looks like... Well, there's no question that the American consumer is paying for Trump's war. Now, I pay \$5.25 a gallon for gas in northwest New Jersey. It's probably worse in D.C. Yeah.

#Max

Yeah, it's the Israel-first price hike. I mean, this is because of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which Trump was warned about by the National Security Council's director of the Iran desk, Nate Swanson. What did Trump do? He fired Nate Swanson on orders from Laura Loomer, who three days ago was justifying a mass shooting at a mosque in San Diego and maintains close access to Donald Trump. So here we are with the economy spiraling. Gas is over \$6 a gallon here in the D.C. area—premium gas at least. I think one of the worst things for the economy is that everyone was expecting rates to go down, interest rates. They're not just going to stay the same; they're probably going to go up in July because of the crisis in bonds.

The entire bottom of the economy is falling out, and middle-class people who already had very little hope of owning homes or owning the homes they wanted in this economy are just being crushed. You're also looking at \$200 billion in lost economic output. The failure to cut rates could cost the economy \$200 billion. So the real cost of the war—the Trump administration estimated it at \$25 billion—it could go up to a trillion dollars if you look at the real cost. Also, food production. This is already a crisis in Asia because of the lack of fertilizer. Motor oil is now being panic-bought by do-it-yourself oil changers, and AutoZone has actually put out a memo warning that they will face a 40% to 50% shortage in lubricant.

Now, I understand that Jared Kushner, Steve Witkoff, and Mark Dubowitz over at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies have probably never done an oil change on their luxury cars, so they might not be able to sympathize with this. But this is enormous for the American consumer, and it's really the working-class American consumer who's feeling the pain. And what they need to understand is that they are hurting because of Trump's Zionist war. And Donald Trump, again today—I'm sure Chris has this clip—declared that he's 99% with Israel and with Netanyahu, and that he might run for prime minister in Israel when he's done being president of the United States. He's just flaunting it. He's rubbing it in our faces.

#Judge Napolitano

Wow. He claimed on Tuesday that he canceled war plans for Wednesday because the heads of Gulf states asked him to. None of those heads publicly admitted communicating with Trump in the past week, and three of them have actually denied that they made these requests. Is he contemplating these attacks, or is this just his personality and his way of negotiating?

#Max

He's absolutely contemplating an attack. And if he's not contemplating it, Israel is planning it, which would necessarily drag Trump in, given the amount of control and leverage they have over him. Israel is likely to escalate in Lebanon very soon in order to generate this kind of escalation in Iran. Israel can't do without a war. Netanyahu himself personally can't do without a war in Iran. And Donald Trump is likely to do it as well because he can't accept failure. He can't find an off-ramp. However, militarily, there are no objectives that he can achieve. It's practically impossible for him to open up the Strait of Hormuz.

Consider what the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Pentagon Joint Chiefs, Dan Kane, said in testimony when questioned by Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois, asking him, why can't you open the Strait of Hormuz with this massive trillion-dollar military against a country that spends a fraction of its budget on its military? And Dan Kane said, well, there are many small boats that could possibly harass our Navy and our boats, acknowledging that they have lost—the U.S. military has failed—and that Donald Trump, when he says Iran's navy has been destroyed, is lying. The IRGC stated today on social media that it hit a nuclear bunker in the Israeli city of Arad, which is actually the company town for people who work in Dimona at the secret nuclear facility.

And they produced an image to illustrate their point. They also stated that they have upgraded their ballistic missiles several generations in the interregnum between the last round of conflict and the inevitable next one. These ballistic missiles will flood the airspace of Gulf states, especially the UAE. If Donald Trump attacks Iran, they will destroy desalination plants. They will destroy oil infrastructure. They will destroy the Fujairah port of the UAE, which had previously been a safe haven. And those countries will fall into existential crisis and doom, and possibly those monarchies will cease to exist. And so this is what Trump is citing as his reason for pulling back. But, you know, Trump could also be lying and using this as a kind of ruse. So it could come any day.

#Judge Napolitano

Wow. Wow. What is your take on the defeat of Congressman Thomas Massie and the influence of the Zionist lobby in that Republican primary in Kentucky?

#Max

I probably have too much to say on it for this conversation, the short period of time we have. And there isn't much to say that won't overlap with what your other guests will say and what anyone who's been paying attention to what's been happening in this country the past several years will say, which is that Israel essentially rigged a Republican primary. And now, you know, pro-Israel corporate talking heads like Jake Tapper are trying to claim that actually it was just due to Trump's popularity that Massie was run out. But who was he run out by? He was run out by essentially a warm body. I don't even know if it's a warm body. I would call it an Israeli zombie candidate.

Ed Gowrine, who claims to be a former member of Navy SEAL Team 6, is probably an analyst. He's covered up most of his record. It's shrouded in secrecy. He constantly declares that he was on secret missions in places that he can't mention. He doesn't engage with the press, did not speak to the press or answer any questions after introducing Pete Hegseth, the self-styled Secretary of War, who he falsely described as an Army Ranger. A bunch of guys inflating their military backgrounds and engaging in stolen valor. But it doesn't really matter. They could have run a potato with the amount of money that was being pumped into that fairly small rural district.

We're talking about \$35 million, making it the most expensive congressional race in history. The cost per vote—what is it? My math might be hazy, but there were about 100,000 votes. Over 10,000 of the votes for Ed Gowrine were mail-in ballots. Ed Gowrine received something like 375% more of the vote than Thomas Massie's last challengers in 2024. Very unusual. Very unusual. Was Thomas Massie 2020'd? I mean, that's what a lot of America Firsters are asking right now. But the real truth is this was simply a rigged race because the money came in mostly through Miriam Adelson and Paul Singer, the two biggest donors, who donate solely on the basis of Israel. This whole race was a referendum on Israel, as Haaretz declared.

And unlike in the two other most expensive races in congressional history, which were also funded by Israel's unregistered cutouts, this was not done in a stealthy way. The defeat of Jamal Bowman, which cost about \$10 million, and the defeat of Cori Bush, which cost about \$9 or \$10 million, were all done through a stealth PAC. The ads that attacked them had nothing to do with Israel. The hand of Israel was concealed, even as these same Republican-oriented Likudnik donors were donating through those super PACs to rig a Democratic race. In this case, the Republican Jewish Coalition, which is totally funded by Miriam Adelson and Bernard Marcus and other Israel First billionaires, they didn't even hide it. The RJC's spokesman said, "We are going to win this race."

He's not even talking about the Republican Party. He's talking about Israel. This was very clearly a shot across the bow to anyone who seeks to do what Thomas Massie did, which is introduce the Iran War Powers Act and actually try to pass it, expose the Epstein files, introduce a resolution or a bill to register AIPAC. No, you can't do that. However, what you can do—and this is what I find so interesting, this is what says it all about Trump and today's Republican Party, which is built around Trump—but it says it all about the forces that define Trump, which therefore define the Republican Party—is you can be a Republican candidate who's relatively loyal to Trump but does not support mass deportations, which Trump campaigned on.

You can be a Republican candidate who is relatively loyal to Trump on the Iran war and be moderately pro-choice on abortion, as Nancy Mace is, for example, and Trump won't seek to destroy you. And the line is Israel. And that is the most important priority of the Trump administration. That's what Massie's defeat demonstrates and is intended to demonstrate. And it exposes the whole farce of the Republican Party and Republican leadership going back to Reagan. Because Republican leaders have always basically been fronts for the 1%, frontmen for what you could call the capitalist

class or the Epstein class. And under Trump, the capitalist class of the Republican Party, that wing, is militantly Zionist and Likudnik. So that's their priority. But how do you get the voters out?

How do you get white Protestant or Catholic voters in red states or in swing states out to vote who don't have college educations? You campaign on cultural issues. You don't talk about Israel. And so Donald Trump campaigned on immigration, which was a real crisis when he campaigned in 2016. And he campaigned on biological males in women's sports. And he used all the classic cultural wedge issues the way George W. Bush did. And now he's abandoned all of those issues. Donald Trump is not pushing for mass deportations now. He is not pushing a hard line against trans folks, although he'll say something. His only line right now, his main red line, is Israel, the Iran war. And I should mention, he also campaigned on affordability because of rising inflation under Biden.

He doesn't care about affordability anymore. He's demonstrating openly that he couldn't care less. He's openly said that he doesn't care about affordability or prices, that he must continue to maintain a siege on Iran. So this is it. I mean, this is the only meaning of Donald Trump — his fealty to Likudnik billionaires who control him and represent Israel as the main driving issue in the Republican Party, to the point where they're actually trying to make Israel the main cultural issue among Christian right voters, which are the most tightly organized bloc, making it more important to them than even abortion or, you know, the gays. And this is highly significant, and it will define the Republican Party going forward.

#Judge Napolitano

But isn't a backlash to the Zionist dominance of American politics slowly building and growing here in the U.S.? Don't you feel that?

#Max

I feel it. I mean, everyone watching this is part of that backlash, yes. But it's not going to play out in the Republican Party under Donald Trump. And Thomas Massie, Marjorie Taylor Greene — they were representatives of the backlash. Massie has always kind of, he's always been opposed to like \$4 billion in aid to Israel, but he became more outspoken following the Gaza genocide in a way I hadn't seen before. And Marjorie Taylor Greene had a complete conversion on this issue, and they were destroyed. So the real arena of contestation on this issue going forward for the next three, four years will be the Democratic Party.

And we will see the Democrats, in a much more insidious fashion, seek to crush those who want to represent the heart and soul of the Democratic Party's constituency, which opposes sending weapons to Israel at rates close to like 90%. There is no pro-Israel grassroots constituency in the Democratic Party. And it will be, again, I think, another illustration of oligarchy and the undemocratic nature of the duopoly when we see those voices and figures get crushed leading up to the Democratic primary and convention once again.

#Judge Napolitano

Shortly before we came on air, the Justice Department announced the indictment of former Cuban President Raúl Castro for ordering the shooting down of one or two planes that had taken off from the United States toward Cuba. I'm sure you can enlighten us on all this.

#Max

Well, this ceremony, I got to catch a few minutes of it before we went live. It's a ceremony. It's not a traditional press conference where the Department of Justice appears with grim functionaries announcing to the typical press who cover the DOJ in Washington at their building over on Pennsylvania Ave. This was in Miami. It was before a collection of the Miami Mafia's henchmen who have been involved in regime change and terrorist activity against Cuba for decades. There were cheers when the indictment of Raúl Castro was read. And I think it's important for us to understand the history here, to understand how the Department of Justice is really flipping not just history, but morality and international law on its head in order to indict Castro, who was the defense minister at the time of this 1996 incident.

Brothers to the Rescue was part of this wider mafia of groups that had engaged in CIA-backed terrorism against Cuba over the decades, especially spanning back to the '70s, actually the 1960s. And they would fly over Cuba in order to provoke the Cuban military, and they would drop leaflets calling for regime change, urging people to violently rebel against the government. And tensions were high in 1996, so high that an email from the Clinton administration that I have in front of me contained basically a prediction of what would happen if Brothers to the Rescue was allowed by the FAA to fly over Cuba. We've received information.

This is January 22, 1996. We've received information from the State Department that another unauthorized flight is going to happen in the morning. The plane, according to State, did not overfly Havana, nor did it drop propaganda. In light of last week's intrusion, this latest overflight can only be seen as further taunting of the Cuban government. Several Clinton administration officials protested with Brothers to the Rescue. Richard Nuccio, who was the leading Cuba specialist, the point man on Cuba and Cuban negotiations at the White House, actually went straight to the FAA and to the Transportation Department to demand that they block Brothers to the Rescue from flying over Cuba because Cuba would retaliate.

The Cuban government had protested with the United States, demanding that they stop these flights. They were violating Cuban airspace. Remember what happened in the U.S. when supposed Chinese balloons were flying over the U.S.? They were shot down by F-22s and turned out to be hobby balloons. No country would allow this to take place. But the bigger issue here is this Cuban mafia that I explained. Brothers to the Rescue was not part of some peaceful network. Their

godfather was someone named Jorge Mas Canosa, who was a CIA operative who headed the Cuban American National Foundation, which was sort of the main nexus of all of these regime change operators in Miami.

And Jorge Mas Canosa was very close to someone named Luis Posada Carriles, who was also a CIA operative, and Orlando Bosch. And those two figures, with Mas Canosa's blessing and under CIA direction, bombed a Cuban airliner, Cubana Flight 455, in 1976, killing 73 passengers. This was part of a wave of bombings that had been happening for years against Cuban shipping and Cuban hotels. Cubans were shot on beaches in order to prevent tourism from the U.S. to Cuba by this very network. And so the culmination of this conflict was the shutdown of these flights.

But the Cuban government understood that these flights were part of a wider effort that had been historically backed by the CIA to actually violently topple their government. And no government would have tolerated this. So Raul Castro was being indicted for defending his country against CIA-backed terrorists. And his indictment will now open the possibility of another special forces invasion of Cuba and his kidnapping at the age of 95, which would be disgusting and horrendous and would not lead to the negotiation that I think anyone in Cuba thinks would be a proper solution for Cubans who are suffering under a U.S. oil blockade. And just one last kind of point or factor.

#Judge Napolitano

I was just going to ask you, to give you a chance to relax your voice for a minute. How old is he? He's 95, and they indicted him for something that happened 30 years ago.

#Max

Yeah, I mean, it might even be difficult to physically transport him, but the scenes would certainly be pathetic and upsetting. Marco Rubio announced a plan to essentially do regime change in Cuba today. And that plan is being heavily influenced and directed by someone named Jorge Mas Santos, who is the son of Jorge Mas Canosa, the CIA-backed terror don in Miami. He is the billionaire owner of the football club Inter Miami. And he is at the heart of the Trump administration's plan to take over Cuba and privatize as much as possible. I think there does need to be a deal. There does need to be a negotiation.

Cuban people are suffering so much right now. We sent a reporter at The Grayzone all across Cuba to experience what Cubans are experiencing. There are excess deaths. You're seeing depopulation in towns everywhere. People have to go to black markets to get antibiotics because of the siege. And there's simply no energy. There's no lights. So there has to be a solution. But the Trump administration's solution is so maximalist that—and they're now basically putting a gun to the head of the most historic figure of Cuba's revolution—that it makes a real negotiation and a real deal impossible. I can only see harm coming out of this.

#Judge Napolitano

Is Raúl Castro in the government today at age 95?

#Max

No, he's not, and I know that the government is eager for a deal, and the Trump administration keeps saying they're just too foolish and corrupt to make a deal. But for many months, especially Marco Rubio—who comes out of this, represents the more extreme wings of the Miami gusano class—he has rejected any form of negotiations with Cuba. And now he's basically given Cuba an ultimatum: accept \$100 million in donations through a delivery mechanism that we choose, which will allow us to install a parallel government on your island, or face more death and misery. And again, I just don't see how any sovereign, self-respecting government can accept that. The best thing to do, by the way—do American taxpayers want to spend \$100 million to send to Cuba? Why not just lift the embargo, and we spend nothing, and just allow business?

#Judge Napolitano

The government doesn't care about taxpayers. The president is in the process of taking \$1.8 billion from the Justice Department to give away to his political allies from January 6th.

#Max

And to his family, I mean, it's just a slush fund to protect a criminal mafia. That's all it is. While Marco Rubio declares that Cuba is actually the criminal mafia. I mean, the levels of projection are staggering.

#Judge Napolitano

Yes. Max, thank you very much. I know we covered the full gamut, and I appreciate your advice, counsel, and analysis, as I always do. And I know the audience does as well, which is huge right now. All the best to you, Max. Thank you, my friend, and my best to your family.

#Max

Thank you. Sure.

#Judge Napolitano

Coming up at three today, if you're watching us live, in 33 minutes, the great Phil Giraldi and Judge Napolitano for Judging Freedom.