

# Larry Johnson: U.S. & Iran THROW DOWN Over the Strait of Hormuz

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## **#Nima**

Hi, everybody. Today is Monday, May 25th, 2026, and our dear friend, our dear, dear friend Larry Johnson is here with us. Welcome back, Larry.

## **#Larry**

Hey, I'm going George Galloway today. I'm wearing the hat.

## **#Nima**

Larry, let's start. Please check the microphone levels, because I try to do it sometimes and it doesn't—you know, we don't know what's going on with the program sometimes. It levels up, you know, it evens the level of the mic, but sometimes it doesn't work. Please check that. Does that sound all right or not? Yeah, it's good, it's okay. Yeah. Larry, let me start with the latest news that the Iranian delegation—the head of the parliament, together with the head of the Central Bank of Iran and the foreign minister of Iran—they're in Qatar. It's about the Iranian frozen assets. What do we know?

And Donald Trump had a long, long post on his Truth Social. I don't know, he was telling us a huge story about how amazing the deal is, and he's making the deal. Some countries are not happy with that. Some countries are part of this. And one of the amazing things that he mentioned is that Iran is going to be part of the Abraham Accords. What in the world is happening here? The guy is just losing everything. What is your understanding of the current situation between Iran and the United States? We're going to talk about other issues, but when it comes to the deal, when it comes to the negotiations between Iran and the United States, what's going on?

## **#Larry**

Iran is engaged in the negotiations. It's the United States that's negotiating against itself. That's the problem, because you've got this Zionist lobby that's just going crazy. When word of this leaked out

on Saturday, and I wrote about it last night, across the board the reaction was extremely negative. So Trump faces an uphill slog there. Then the Israeli cabinet's not at all cooperative. They're not going, "Oh, great, this is good news." So they're opposed to it. You know, I just think Trump's buying time until Eid is over, and then he's going to attack again. You know, it's insane. But, you know, they keep—the way that different terms are presented in the press—that one minute it appears that Iran's going to have to wait to get sanctions relief, and then on the other hand, the sanctions relief is imminent.

The assets are going to be frozen or unfrozen? No, they're going to stay frozen. Yves Smith pointed something out to me that I had neglected to consider, and I think she's exactly right. Trump does not unilaterally have the means to lift all sanctions because some of those sanctions have been imposed by acts of Congress. So Trump can't just say, oh, well, screw it, I'm not going to follow that. I mean, he's going to have to get Congress to lift those sanctions. So this process is a lot more complicated than it would appear. What is certain is Iran at least knows what it wants, and Iran is going to stick to those fundamental positions. It's going to insist upon sanction relief and the return of the frozen assets.

And if—to the extent that Doha—I didn't realize Doha might have been involved with it on the sanctions, you know, freezing assets—the other place you'd have to go would be into Dubai, to the United Arab Emirates. I'm sure they've got a substantial amount of Iranian assets potentially frozen. So, you know, I think this is just the lull, unfortunately. I don't see... there's not the political momentum in the United States to say, let's stop the war, let's find a solution. It's still that basically Iran's going to have to do whatever the hell we tell them or else. That's still the attitude. So until that attitude changes, I don't see any fundamental change going forward with, you know, particularly these countries signing on to the Abraham Accords. Not going to happen. The Israelis have proven to be too brutal.

And, you know, right now in Israel, they're fighting amongst themselves. You know, just overnight, Ben-Gvir is insisting that they've got to start blowing up every building in Lebanon. And, you know, when Bibi Netanyahu thinks that's too extreme, that tells you how crazy things are. You know, Netanyahu reportedly pushed back and said, you know, we're not going to do that. You know, good God, where did he finally, you know, find a conscience? So this is, yeah, it's disarray. You know, it's more market manipulation. The markets that are open—they're not open in the States today because it's a holiday, Memorial Day—but the other commodity markets around the world that are open, this drove down the price of oil. All peace is at hand? It's not at hand. But, you know, this whole charade surrounding market manipulation is sure making somebody a lot of money.

**#Nima**

And it seems that the frozen assets in Qatar are something like \$11 billion. And they're there to talk about this and that. Larry, do you think it seems the Qatari delegation went—it was the night before last—they went to Iran to talk with the Iranians. Was it part of this negotiation on Iranian frozen assets, or was it something beyond that?

## **#Larry**

No, I think it's something beyond that. So Pakistan is working furiously behind the scenes to construct sort of the lead for China and for Russia, to construct a new security architecture in the Persian Gulf. You know, what I'm told is that both Qatar and Saudi Arabia are just basically sick and tired of the United States. They think being in this relationship with the United States has created more risk for them, more cost. So they'd just as soon get out from under that. And so those discussions are underway in terms of who's going to do what, how the security of these various countries will be guaranteed, and it gets into economic security as well. So there's a lot that's going on. The good news is they're talking. You know, the fact that this senior Iranian delegation went to Qatar to talk to, you know, the leaders there.

Because Qatar, of all the countries in the Persian Gulf, I think Qatar has suffered the most physical damage to its economic infrastructure—much more than Saudi Arabia. Because some of the, like, the aluminum plant and the facilities for liquefied natural gas, those have been severely damaged. And it's not a matter of months of repairs; it's potentially years of repairs ahead of them just to get back online. So they're clearly suffering a cash loss right now. So this, you know, ignore—I guess I'd say, ignore what Donald Trump is saying because he's all over the board and does not yet have a clear plan. One minute he wants to blow up Iran, and the next minute he says he wants them to sign up with the Abraham Accords.

## **#Nima**

The thing that you mentioned about Smotrich, he's talking about you have to bring down 10 buildings in Dahia, for example, in Beirut, in response to every drone. Here is the question: what are these drones doing to Israel that they're so desperate when it comes to these drones? Ten buildings in response to one drone? What is that?

## **#Larry**

Well, the drones in Hezbollah are both destroying tanks, armored vehicles, and killing soldiers in large numbers. Israel is suffering more casualties in this war with Hezbollah than it did in 2006—I think substantially more. And in terms of loss of vehicles and such, I think it exceeds what they lost in the fighting in Gaza. You know, Israel keeps very close hold of the casualty figures, but I'd be willing to say that, in fact, I think Israel has sustained more casualties in this last six months of fighting with Hezbollah than they did in the previous, you know, three years in Gaza.

## **#Nima**

Here is what the spokesperson of the Iranian Foreign Ministry said: there are no tolls and there will be no tolls in the Strait of Hormuz. But ships have to pay an environmental protection fee in a joint system.

## **#Larry**

It's a word game. You also call it tolls. It's not tolls; it's just a usage fee. You know, it's like if you go to Las Vegas now, you have to pay a resort fee. It's an extra tax, but they call it a resort fee.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. By the way, the Chinese use that. You remember before Donald Trump, you know, the meeting between Donald Trump and Xi, they used that term. It's an environmental sort of fee that we're paying to Iran. Larry, Donald Trump, it seems that he's putting pressure on GCC countries to normalize their relationship with Israel. I don't know if that is achievable at this particular time because, you know, the war is not over, in my opinion. And we may have some new escalations in the region. And he's putting pressure: if you want to have a deal between Iran and the United States, you have to improve or normalize your relationship with Israel, right? How is that going to help Israel? How is that going to work? I don't see that happening because we know their position even before this war started. They said without a Palestinian state, there would be no improvement in the relationship they have with Israel, if any, at this particular moment.

## **#Larry**

Well, yesterday—or it was the day before yesterday—when Trump had that phone call with all the Gulf Arabs, and Turkey, and Egypt, and brought up the whole issue of, “Hey, so we'll sign on to the Abraham Accords, right?” there were crickets. Nobody said a word. It's like, okay, don't tell him to bug off, he'll go into a rage, just say nothing. He said, “Oh, that's interesting.” So yeah, it's not going to happen. The time for the Abraham Accords has come and gone, and with the slaughter of—well, it was probably more than 100,000 Palestinian men, women, and children, easily—I don't see any of the governments in the Gulf, with maybe the exception of the United Arab Emirates, having the stomach to do that.

## **#Nima**

No. If you were to mention, Larry, the difficulties we're facing right now, is that putting an end to the war on all fronts? Is that going to be the Strait or foremost? Is that going to be the Iranian nuclear program? Because today, this morning, we've learned from the Iranian foreign ministry that

the focus right now is on Iran ending the war on each and every front, which we know is impossible with the Israeli government, with Benjamin Netanyahu, with what they're doing as we talked. They're bombing Lebanon. They're bombing Gaza. They're hitting people in the West Bank.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, no, look, that I think has been one of the, let's call it, inflexible Iranian demands. It's not just a matter of, okay, you're going to stop attacking us, you're going to stop attacking Lebanon, you're going to stop attacking the Palestinian people. And the United States is in a position to stop that. We pull the plug completely on Israel. But politically, that's not going to happen. Trump's not going to do that. So that means the war against the Palestinians and the Lebanese is going to continue. Israel may scale it back a little bit, but remember Trump's boast that he controls Netanyahu and he tells him to stop bombing in Lebanon.

By God, they'll stop bombing in Lebanon. And what's Israel been doing ever since? They've been bombing every day in Lebanon. So, you know, unless Trump actually gets serious and orders the Department of War, Department of State, cut the aid, pull it back, withdraw forces, withdraw advisors, then that might get Israel's attention, and the United States could force an agreement. If the fighting stopped and the Israelis basically were willing to recognize a Palestinian state, yeah, then I think an Abraham Accord is possible. But that's not going to happen.

Israel is the Zionists we're talking about. You know, they're still talking about how they'd like to provoke a new round of fighting with Iran and then take advantage of that to blow up the Al-Aqsa Mosque and blame it on Iran, hoping that would provoke a war between Iran and the rest of the Arab Muslim world, and then clear the way so that Israel can go build the Third Temple. I mean, this entire thing is just so ridiculous. I don't know how familiar you are with the Torah, the Old Testament as Christians call it, but when the children of Israel escaped Egypt, they were warned: don't make any graven images, don't make something physical that you worship physically. That was the command.

And then when Moses goes up to get the Ten Commandments and comes down, they had made a golden calf, and they were worshiping the golden calf, and he broke what had been sort of version one of the commandments and went up to get version two. My point in all of this is that when you get into the book of Deuteronomy, it's about, okay, you're going to build this temple, and it's going to have this kind of silk and all this gold, and you're going to have this unguilted. I mean, it's detailed about building a graven image. So, as I said, I would tell the Jews and the Christians, your God is pretty damn confused, right?

Because on the one hand, he claims, don't make any graven images. Then he spends an entire chapter like an architectural digest: hey, build this and garnish this and carry this Ark of the Covenant around. So it's like all graven image. And what's so sad about this is people still believe this crap, and based upon that, are willing to kill other human beings in pursuit of this graven image,

which their God supposedly told them never to build. Sorry, it's just stuff like that drives me crazy. Because you'll get sane, rational people, educated people, say, oh, the temple, you know, we're going to bring among the religious Jews.

They'll be like, oh yeah, we'll get the temple, man, the Messiah comes. And the Christians say, yeah, you already killed him once. You want him to come back? You know, so that's where we get into all this eschatological belief. And the Muslims have theirs. You know, I just, I wish, my own feeling with respect to religion is, if you believe that God is the creator of all life, then respect that everybody that's around you is also part of God's creation. Treat them as such. Okay? Stop killing each other, starving each other, persecuting each other. That's enough. Sorry. That's your religious lesson for today.

## **#Nima**

Larry, Donald Trump said in his latest post, he says maybe one or two countries don't want to have this deal between the United States and Iran. Who are those countries he's talking about? Israel and UAE, basically? Um, no, actually I think he's talking more about Iran, um, and um...

## **#Larry**

I'm not sure who else. Take your pick — Qatar, the Saudis. I think the Saudis are still willing to cut a deal with Israel.

## **#Nima**

They've never been a principled lot, in terms of watching them over the years.

## **#Larry**

Wow. Again, Trump is indulging a fantasy because the ingredients for an agreement are there, but it's going to require the United States to accept some concessions that the Zionist crowd will not tolerate. So I don't see how he bridges that gap. I don't see him being strong enough to tell them, "Oh, shut up, I'm ignoring you." I don't see him doing that.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, I think Lindsey Graham said that. He posted that whatever is happening between Iran and the United States, the outcome is disastrous for Israel. But there's no way to change the reality for Israel.

## **#Larry**

Right.

## **#Nima**

How can Donald Trump change it? There is no way. What is that? So what would be the solution in the minds of people like Lindsey Graham?

## **#Larry**

Well, and that's the other element to this. People think this is just Bibi. The problem is Bibi Netanyahu. If we just get rid of Bibi, boy, everything would be great. You get rid of Bibi, you've still got the Zionist problem. And the extremists that are represented by the likes of Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, they unfortunately are a very strong minority. But when you tie them together with other elements of Likud, the conservatives, they still are the majority voice in Israel. So it's not that you're moving away from extremism. You've got the extremism as dominant. So like I said, Bibi goes away, the policies aren't going to change dramatically.

The problem Israel has right now is its own limitations on its military power. Despite its claim that "we're the strongest, the best in the region," I think the total manpower, if they called up all the reservists, would be 300,000 or 400,000. I think right now they're getting by with keeping 90,000 active, and that's stretching them. And in tandem with that, we're seeing a rise in suicide. So you've got not just traumatic brain injury, but this murdering of civilians and children is taking a toll. There are still many Israeli soldiers that do have a conscience, that do have a good sense of right and wrong.

And they're haunted by these images of what they're doing to these people. Now, there are some within the Israeli ranks that are completely inhuman. They don't care. They'll rape and murder because they enjoy it. You know, I just saw that there was a U.S. citizen who had gone over to fight, and he just came back and committed suicide as soon as he got back stateside. So, you know, look, this is consistent with what happened to the German Wehrmacht, the German army, when they invaded Poland and then proceeded into Ukraine and began engaging in these mass executions of Jews along the way.

One of the pressures that led to the development of, if you will, gas chambers and other ways to do mass extermination was because these soldiers were having mental breakdowns. The regular army was being affected by it. You had to really have this army of fanatics that would engage in this kind of conduct. And so you're seeing the same kind of phenomenon now among the Israeli Defense Force. So this is, you know, trying to fight a war in Gaza, a war in the West Bank. They haven't called it a war, but that's what it is. And then a war in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah's capabilities have been dramatically enhanced. And the use of these first FPV drones is causing significant damage.

## **#Nima**

Let's assume Donald Trump decides to leave the Middle East. Where is Israel today compared to what it was before? And if they continue with this attitude of attacking Lebanon, attacking Syria, attacking Gaza, how long can they sustain these sorts of attacks?

## **#Larry**

No, they can't do it without, you know, the U.S. has to be there fully supporting them. Without U.S. support, Israel can't sustain this. It's that simple. Their economy is already declining. And this is three years without regular tourist income. You know, it used to be, you know, Israel was a big tourist destination for a lot of Christians, and, you know, that's dried up. You know, that is just a shadow of what it used to be. And then the physical damage they've suffered from the missile attacks. So there's a rebuilding going on, perhaps, but there are also reports that an increasing number of professionals, scientists, and such, they're leaving Israel. They're going to other places, Cyprus, for example. So they're not staying in Israel. So Israel is suffering a loss of personnel, not just from the war, but from people deciding to abandon it, a declining economy. So if the United States pulls the plug, Israel has no future.

## **#Nima**

Larry, the logic is that usually the casualties or the suffering in the aftermath of wars for the soldiers, for the troops, are more than what it was during the war. How is that going to, I would say, considering what has happened so far with Israel, is that going to bring some sort of huge impact?

## **#Nima**

I don't know, a huge influence on the Israeli army. I'm not talking about society. How is that going to be, how the army is going to be influenced by the war in terms of that? Because we know we had reports about the Israeli army collapsing, and they have a problem with manpower. But how is that going to influence the body of the army in Israel?

## **#Larry**

Well, despite all the Western propaganda, the Israeli army is not a professional army. It's a reserve army, and it is poorly led, poorly disciplined, and is not, in my view, really worthy of being called a professional military because they engage in such heinous criminal acts that are not isolated instances. It is widespread. And, you know, even getting down to the rape and debasement of prisoners. So, you know, the Geneva Convention was a creation—there we go, got it out—in the aftermath of World War II to try to correct and prevent the horrors that took place in World War II, the mass extermination of populations, the number of criminal acts that were committed against civilians, to try to ensure that there's some protection for civilians, that there was some sense of a rule of law.

Well, we're now in the process of destroying it. The Geneva Convention essentially has been destroyed. And the destruction has taken place over the last, well, started probably 10 years ago in the Donbass, where the Ukrainian forces, you know, murdered civilians in Crimea, in Odessa in particular, and then proceeded to, you know, bomb and shell civilians in Luhansk and Donetsk. And, you know, it's gone on. You know, here's the United States. We kill. We see somebody in a boat in the Caribbean. We say, oh, they're a drug dealer. We blow them up. We kill them. No due process. They don't represent, you know, under any kind of international law, they don't represent an imminent threat. And yet we say we're going to kill them.

And so it's not, you know, I don't want to single out Israel and pretend Israel is just the bad guy here. Hell, the United States is the worst in terms of what we do, and we always wrap it with a cloak of morality as if, you see, we're so much better, you know, we're enlightened beings, you know, we know what's good, what's right, what's holy. And yet, you know, we've got a track record, unfortunately, of just killing way too many civilians. So the international law is out, and Israel, as its defense chief testified before the national security team in Israel about five weeks ago, as reported by Alastair Crooke and Aisling, his wife, it was, you know, he said, hey, we can't keep this up. We're broken. And they can't. But there's been no movement or evidence since then to back off and to seek another way.

## **#Nima**

Here is Ben Gurion. He says that Israel must not normalize the reality of explosive drones. The time has come for the prime minister to bang on Trump's table and tell him Israel is returning to war in Lebanon. We need to cut off Lebanese electricity and seize the Zahrani area and return it. He's basically saying that we have to start the war again. We have a full-scale war, and we have to start it because of the drones. And is that going to be part of the, you know, because right now the two sides are negotiating? It seems that Israel is just moving in the direction of a full attack on Lebanon to sabotage everything. Yeah.

## **#Larry**

Go ahead.

## **#Nima**

I don't know what Donald Trump would do. We haven't seen that sort of backbone when it comes to Israel from the Trump administration.

## **#Larry**

Well, it's all predicated on dehumanizing Hezbollah, dehumanizing the Lebanese people, dehumanizing the Palestinians. As long as they're no longer really human beings, these are

terrorists, then you're entitled to do whatever you want to them. And that's why I wrote a couple of days ago, because I watched that debate that took place last Wednesday between John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt on one hand, and our own version of Ben-Gvir, Mike Pompeo. You know, Pompeo used to be fat like Ben-Gvir, but now, you know, he's thinned up. You know, he's still a vicious bigot, in my view, along with Victoria Nuland. And throughout that, he kept talking about the thousands of Israelis that had been killed by Hezbollah. So, you know, I said, that doesn't sound right. Let's get the actual numbers.

The actual numbers are fewer than, since 1982, in terms of, quote, Hezbollah attacks, fewer than 1,000 Israelis have been killed by Hezbollah. But by the same token, Israel has killed over, conservatively, 92,000 Palestinians worldwide. Now, that goes with, you know, people say, well, no, they've killed far more in Gaza. I'm saying let's go with the numbers that the Israeli Defense Forces themselves accepted of 72,000, 73,000. Now, I agree, I think the number is far higher. But what we can agree upon, at least, even the Israelis concede that they've killed close to 100,000 Palestinians in the last 44 years, going back to 1982. That means for every dead Israeli, there's 100 dead Palestinians. And then, you know, Mike Pompeo wanted to call Hezbollah monsters. Look at the numbers. Who's the monster? Real clear. Those who kill the most people are the monster. Very simple. You know, we don't need to make this complicated.

## **#Nima**

Here is what CNN just reported, Larry: that Saudi Arabia rejects Trump's normalization demand and insists on Palestinian statehood. And this is the, you know, we just talked about it. I don't see Saudi Arabia going that way. And they know what has happened so far. They have sacrificed everything. You know, they participated, they helped Israel and the United States in this war against Iran. And I don't see that, because if they do that, the population, you know, the public opinion is going to crush them, in my opinion.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, it blew up in their face. I don't doubt that Mohammed bin Salman was privately telling Trump, yeah, okay, yeah, we got you. Yeah, go get Iran, get rid of the mullahs, and yeah, we'll all be good. I think on February 27th, there wasn't a single leader in the Persian Gulf who believed that Iran could withstand the full attack of the United States and Israel. I don't think they had any appreciation of the potential success of a decapitation strike. But I think they widely assumed that this would be the end of Iran.

And when that didn't take place, and Iran immediately began firing back and immediately began attacking U.S. military infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, in Qatar, in Bahrain, in Kuwait, in the UAE, that was sort of an eye-opening moment of revelation for the Gulf Arabs. They're like, holy smokes, the United States said they're going to protect us. How's that protection going? It's not. I think now the Saudis have come to the realization that being aligned with the United States is not a net positive.

It's a net negative. And the offer that's being presented via Russia and China, with Pakistan taking the lead in presenting this, I think it's significant.

In fact, I was told, I learned yesterday, that reportedly Pakistan has offered a nuclear deal with the Saudis in order to protect Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia would be under a nuclear umbrella of Pakistan, so that may be against Israel. Yes, I was talking to somebody and said, why would the Saudis need that? Who has a nuclear weapon that would attack them? And I went, seriously, you're asking that? Let me see, it begins with an I. Yeah, Israel. So the Saudis now have a guaranteed nuclear umbrella against Israel. The Saudis let the Israelis know, you attack us, you're going to get blasted with a nuke by Pakistan. That gives the Israelis something else they have to worry about.

## **#Nima**

Larry, how do you define the role of Pakistan? We know that they have a good relationship with the United States, with China, with Iran. And how do you find their foreign policy so far? They're right now in China talking about what's going on between Iran and the United States. I assume China knows everything, each and every dimension of the talks.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, so Pakistan and Iran have had, they've got at least a shared interest in controlling the Baluchis. Now, this is a point I made in a couple of commentaries yesterday, and I need to emphasize it here again. Two days ago, you had a terrorist attack inside Pakistan on a passenger train, killed at least 24. Initially, I heard it was 100, but at least 24 and injured many more. And that was by the Balochistan Liberation Army, BLA. Okay, which country in the world has had a covert intelligence relationship with Baluchi independence groups? It goes back, say, oh, 46, 47 years. That would be Israel. And one of the Israeli plots got exposed a few years back where two Mossad assets, intelligence officers, went into Baluchistan claiming to be American CIA agents and walking around with money.

And they recruited all these people to carry out terrorist attacks in Iran. But they were using them. And so these Baluchis thought that they were working for the Americans. So when that got exposed, it became actually a pretty big deal. There was a lot of pushback. Do you think that this terrorist attack that took place 36 hours ago in Pakistan was just a coincidence? I mean, here's Pakistan now playing a leading role in negotiating a new security architecture for the region, and this Baluchi group just happens to carry out a terrorist attack inside Pakistan to kill Pakistanis. I don't believe that. I believe that this group was working in tandem with Israeli intelligence. And that's why they carried this out, as a warning to Pakistan: keep this up, there's going to be more of the same.

Now, there's no denying that the current head of the Pakistani military, that they were basically helped put in office, you know, ousting Imran Khan was with the help of the United States. So in that sense, Pakistan has had an alliance with the United States, but Pakistan's alliance with China is

stronger. It does have a history of cooperating with the United States on intelligence issues, you know, like U-2 flights going back over 70 years. But in terms of being aligned, getting weapons, getting intelligence that was used against India, that comes from China. So China's influence in Pakistan is significant, and because Pakistan does have, I guess, lines of communication open with Iran, they're in a natural position that they can talk to their Sunni, but they do share a common security interest with Iran.

In fact, you know, the story was about a couple of years back. There were attacks on the Baluchi positions both in Iran and in Pakistan. And apparently, the Iranians allowed the Pakistanis to come into Iran to attack the Baluchi positions, and the Pakistanis allowed the Iranians to go into Pakistan to attack the Baluchi positions. So they're actually coordinating on a cross-border security effort. That hasn't eliminated Balochistan's desire for their own independence. But at least in that, Pakistan and Iran are cooperating. My understanding is Pakistan has convinced Qatar and Saudi Arabia to basically separate themselves from the United States. So this statement today by Saudi Arabia is so emphatic about, no, we're not normalizing with Israel. Not going to happen until the Palestinian people have a state and their rights are protected.

## **#Nima**

I think for the strategy of GCC countries, there are two important impacts. One of them was the Israeli attack on Doha. You remember, they went with 15 fighter jets going over Saudi Arabia and hitting some targets in Doha and getting back without having any sort of difficulties. And then the war in the Middle East between the United States and Iran, with what has happened with American bases. These are two important factors in the minds of those people, the leadership in GCC countries. And they have to find some sort of solution. And, you know, I don't know if Pakistan is going to be part of that.

Maybe in the future there will be some sort of understanding between Iran and the GCC countries, because they see Israel as a threat, as a serious threat to these countries. It's not about Iran. And I don't know if Iran wants to have any sort of conflict with these countries, because they were used during the war to attack Iran, to kill. And many people, Larry, to be honest, looking at the situation right now in Iran, the people, ordinary people, they don't want to forgive these countries for what they've done in this war against Iran. This is the reality of Iranian society, putting aside the Iranian government.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, no, look, this... Right now, we're waiting to see what's going to happen this week. I personally believe that the current hiatus in attacks on Iran is because of Eid and the Hajj. Because the Saudis, I think even the crazies in the Trump administration recognize that if they carried out attacks now against Iran and used Saudi airspace and Saudi assets, Iran would retaliate in a way that would be devastating for Saudi Arabia. And that would reinforce the fact that hanging out with the United

States just makes you a bullet magnet. So Trump and the team have decided they've not turned aggressive.

I know that there are U.S. soldiers, U.S. military personnel, that normally are managing what are called these crisis action teams. They've all been basically on vacation. It's a three-day holiday here in the United States. They were told, be prepared to report in an hour, you'd be on an hour string to get back to work. But they haven't been recalled. So from that standpoint, the U.S. military has basically stood down for the Memorial Day weekend. The question is, how long will that continue? The planning—they've already got the plans in place. They know what targets they want to attack, how they're going to attack them. The issue is, can they have overflight rights over Saudi Arabia?

The Saudis are the key. You think back to that attack on Qatar. The Israelis couldn't have done that without Saudi knowledge and cooperation. Or let me put it this way: if they overflew Saudi Arabian territory without seeking overflight permission, then that would have been a further insult to the Saudis and a clear violation of their sovereignty. Because there's no way you can attack into Doha without flying over Saudi Arabia from Israel. And I think that distance is like 800 miles, which means you're going to have to have a KC-135 up in the air refueling these aircraft. They don't make it to Doha on their own and then fly back. No, they've got to be refueled at least twice.

So, as I said, we didn't get a lot of details about Saudi knowledge or complicity with that attack in Doha. But now, clearly, they don't want any part of this going forward. And, you know, I learned last week that U.S. air refueling activity has been shifted largely into Iraqi territory, because Iraq didn't have an air defense, so we can do basically what we want there. But, you know, we saw even during the first three weeks, there are Iranian-supported units on the ground in Iraq that have surface-to-air missiles. They can't fire and bring down a KC-135. They did it once, and so they could conceivably do it again. So there's, you know, a lot of unknowns at this point.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Larry, it's been a while since we talked about Ukraine, but there is something going on there. Russia is so angry about what has happened — the attack on civilians, school, college girls. They attacked the dormitory.

## **#Larry**

High school. High school.

## **#Nima**

It was high school. So we had the Russian response. They used a ration bomb, if I'm not mistaken.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, the airstrip was reportedly used on a military air base that is southwest of Kiev. Iskanders, Kinzhals, other major missiles were used in Kiev itself, causing significant damage to both government buildings and factories. And I saw today that Russia has reissued a warning to Westerners that basically you should get the hell out of Kiev. I think you're going to see now a continued onslaught, that the capital is going to become unlivable. They're not going to attack—again, the Russians are being careful not to attack civilian targets. They're wanting to be sure that they're hitting military targets. But, you know, this attack that took place in Dakhans, just, you know, it's monstrous. Because 70% of the dead were girls. The other 30% were young men or boys. They're under 18. This was not a military target by any definition.

And the Russians' reaction to their outrage in response to this is deep, very deep, and they're not letting it go. So I think the war in Ukraine has now entered a new phase, and that phase includes the possibility, or maybe the increased probability, of strikes on European territory — in the Baltics, in Romania, in Poland, in Germany. Any factories, any industrial activities involved with producing drones that are used to attack inside Russia, they will be a target now. I think that's been made pretty clear by, you know, Ambassador Polyansky, Russia's rep to the OSCE, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, I think Peskov said something, Maria Zakharova — she's been, you know, equally forceful. So I think, you know, when the foreign ministry is signaling basically, you know, we're turning the page, we're into a new chapter here — you better pay attention.

## **#Nima**

Is Europe getting more radical toward Russia? Because when this war started, it was all about Ukraine is winning, Ukraine is hitting Russia, is defeating Russia on the battlefield. Right now it seems that they're getting more radical. They want to be part of the fight. They want to escalate the situation. I don't know how prepared Europe is today, considering what has happened in the Middle East and how depleted the stockpile of the United States is, because we've learned about the THAAD system, all of that. You know, the reports — how is Europe going to be able, how is that going to be possible for Europe to participate or to escalate the war against Russia?

## **#Larry**

Well, you definitely have a disconnect between what the leaders are saying and what the people are saying. Based on opinion polls, public opinion, they have zero interest in going to war with Russia. If you listen to the statements of Merz, Macron, Starmer, they're keen. And Stubb, this clown out of Finland, they're keen on going to war with Russia. They have no idea what they're getting into. And that's where, you know, Russia's been firm coming back saying, you know, it's gotten to the point that even where Sergey Karaganov, you know, is openly talking about, we're going to have to use nukes against Europe in order to convince them that they can't continue to threaten us like this and threaten us with war without paying a consequence.

They need to learn that there is a real consequence to be paid. So, you know, I don't see Vladimir Putin on his own going down that road, but the pressure in public opinion in Russia is growing to the point they would demand and support that. You know, Medvedev was very clear in his comments the other day that, you know, what happened two days ago now in Ukraine, that needs to happen every day — every day, that volume of missiles and attacks on Kyiv until the Ukrainians surrender. So there is growing... I think we're reaching the point where measured restraint is going out the window, and Russia is going to exercise and employ more force.

## **#Nima**

How about the air defense system of Ukraine? What do they have? Is that the Patriot system?

## **#Larry**

Yeah. What was that word you used? Air defense? Yeah, they don't have one. Gone. You know, Patriot is an effective system to start with, particularly against ballistic and cruise missiles. It might take down some drones, but that's about it. But they're out. You know, Israel's, the air defense system of the United States, based upon Patriot, has drained. It is, you know, running on empty. So it's not like they've got a good stockpile that they can roll out. They don't have that. They've already cannibalized stockpiles in PACOM, in the Pacific, in order to bolster the capability to try to restore capabilities in the Persian Gulf and Israel. In vain, because most of the Iranian ballistic missiles defeat the U.S. PAC-3s, and David's Sling, the Israelis as well.

## **#Nima**

Larry, those drones that the Ukrainians are using against Russia are produced in the United Kingdom. Who's producing them?

## **#Larry**

That I don't know. We've heard allegations. Some are produced in the UK, some are produced in Germany, some are produced in Poland, Romania. But I don't have any firm information to say, oh yeah, I can point to this country. But the Russians apparently do. And so, like I said, they put the Europeans on notice that this is not going to go unanswered.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Do you see the day that Russia would attack American bases in European countries?

## **#Larry**

If the United States gets involved with an attack that kills Russian civilians or children, like what happened the other day, clear evidence of that? Yeah. Then in that case, yes. I think Russia is fed up. A growing number of Russians are fed up with what they see as the duplicity of the United States in enabling attacks on Russia while trying to deny Russia the ability to protect itself.

## **#Nima**

The role of Starlink, Larry, in Iran, against Iran and against Russia. One of the main reasons that these Ukrainian drones are able to attack Russia deep inside Russian territory is satellite, you know, this internet that comes from Starlink. And there should be some sort of responsibility for those people who are providing this sort of support for these, I would say, terrorist acts of the Ukrainian army. Is that going to be discussed in a larger, in a bigger picture? Because if you have something like Starlink and you provide it, it's good. It's a satellite using internet. But after all, if you can use it to overthrow governments, make some sort of chaos, huge casualties, civilians being killed by these sort of acts. What is that? What is that? And who's responsible for that?

## **#Larry**

Well, you know, ultimately in this case, Elon Musk is responsible for that. What you have is the Russians have the capability to take those satellites out. Now, I think one reason the Russians have hesitated to start destroying satellites is it would open them to a similar response from the United States. Now, when you get into a space war where each side is starting to destroy the other's satellites, it gets dangerous because taking out those satellites then reduces communication. And then with lack of communication, you get more unknowns, uncertainty, and a greater chance for a mistake to, you know, escalate very quickly. You know, what's interesting is Elon Musk's dad, Errol, he's made several trips to Russia now.

## **#Nima**

You know, I was with him about a year ago.

## **#Larry**

And, you know, he's been quite taken with it. So, you know, maybe the Russians are hoping that they can work some magic through Errol to get Elon to back off. But it is, you know, I saw within the last two or three weeks, the Russians were announcing they had tested and successfully fielded a new and improved weapons system for taking out satellites. They got it.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, it's a sign for Elon Musk.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, well, you know, Elon's moving into sort of a new business area. Right now, you know, if you use a cell phone, you're basically dependent upon a cell phone tower. But he has purchased bandwidth through a company called EchoStar. And in theory, he could be offering a new form of cell phone. It's like satellite. It's not like they used to have satellite phones. You know, you could buy them. By God, they were expensive. So you had to be a wealthy corporation or a government to afford it. But now he's talking about using the Starlink system to handle phone calls.

So all of a sudden, you don't have to worry about a cell tower being anywhere around. You're going to have full—if your phone connects to a satellite, you can go anywhere and be connected. So that's what's coming. That's the future. And so in that kind of future, then, you get to different kinds of military applications, right? Think about it. If you've got a cell phone, right now they can locate somebody using cell phone towers. What happens if you're using a satellite? You can be located anywhere in the world. It creates some interesting security considerations. I'm talking about personal security.

## **#Nima**

Larry, with this beautiful hat you put on, I want to talk about Cuba, which is important. It seems that Donald Trump, as time goes by and feels that he cannot get anything good for his position out of the war in the Middle East, is going to do something against Cuba. What would that be, in your opinion?

## **#Larry**

I have no idea. You know, so if we send troops ashore, you know, let's call it a new Bay of Pigs, a Bahía de los Cochinos, and oust the existing government. Okay, then what? We, the United States, have to take over that government. Well, are you going to impose military rule? You know, they need to think this thing through, because on the Cuban side, they have thought it through. There are still ardent supporters of Cuba and communism. Cuba was born in a guerrilla war out of the Sierra Maestra Mountains. They've got caches up there—hideouts, weapons storage, ammunition. They'll be able to conduct a guerrilla war against the United States.

And so the United States is, you know, we go in as, quote, liberators, and we're going to find ourselves being attacked. And then in the course of being attacked, we're going to turn around and start attacking the local population because these are guerrilla fighters. They're not wearing uniforms. So the more Cubans we kill, the greater opposition is going to build up. So, I mean, it's just—I don't think these guys have thought it through. They want to flex their muscle and have an aircraft carrier sail by, fine. But starving the people, imposing these kinds of economic sanctions on them, it's inhumane.

## **#Nima**

Let's see what would happen. And I think by Friday we're going to have something else, some news from...

## **#Larry**

Yeah, Eid will be over, so we'll find out if we're going back to war with Iran. So far, like I said, the military, all these guys—Army, Air Force, Marines, Navy—that have been working as cats for the last three months, they basically, most got an extended weekend off. There was just a skeletal crew, you know, monitoring if there's anything going on, but nothing of great importance. So we'll see.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, because as Larry said, they're talking right now about 60 days of ceasefire. But if the United States wants to stay in the vicinity of Iran, close to the Iranian borders, what does that mean? It's the same sort of blockade? It's the same sort of, you know, during the 60 days of ceasefire as the negotiation is going to happen? What would that be? I haven't heard anything from the United States considering that.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, so we're a day—you know, I find it easy to keep track of how long this has gone on because, you know, it started on the last day of February, the 28th. So we had 31 days in March, 30 days in April, so that's 61 days. We're now at day 25 in May, so that's 86, and then count 28, that's 87 days. So, you know, just do the division on that. We're at, you know, roughly week 13. We're coming on week 13 in this, so just a few days. So we're 12 weeks into this conflict. Seven weeks of it have been ceasefire, and in the course of that ceasefire, Iran has been rebuilding its capabilities.

There was one site that had been, you know, the entrances had been bombed and closed—a missile site. It's been all rebuilt, reopened, ready to go. And then, you know, again, reportedly, Iran has received from China some important anti-ship supersonic missiles. And I think Iran's calculus is, if they return, you know, if the United States starts attacking again, they're going to go after U.S. ships in a more concerted fashion than they have heretofore. So this—I said this—hopefully this war doesn't reignite. But, you know, Trump so far is refusing to take the off-ramp.

## **#Nima**

Yeah, they said yesterday they shot down one of these reconnaissance drones with a new air defense system. I haven't heard about it before. They call it Arash the Archer. And this is, you know, I haven't heard—I heard about Bolvar, Meji, something like that.

**#Larry**

Did they shoot it down?

**#Nima**

Yeah.

**#Larry**

Yeah.

**#Nima**

They hit it and they brought it down, yeah. So let's see what happens. Thank you. Thank you so much, Larry, for being with us today.

**#Larry**

All right. Thank you for letting me wear my hat, but I had to outdo your shirt today. So my hat and shirt combo have to trump your fantastic wardrobe selection. Thank you so much, Larry. See you on Friday. All right, my friend. I know you'll stay busy this week, and I'll watch you. Keep it up. See you soon.

**#Nima**

Bye-bye.

**#Larry**

Okay, bye.