

# Mark Sleboda: The Iran Standoff: Why the US Can't Win a War

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## #Nima

Last night, we had a huge, you know, sort of a lot of chaos, by the way, in the Middle East. Iran, specifically what was happening in Iran — two delegates, one Munir, his name is, his first name, I just forgot his first name. But Munir was in Iran. The head of the army of Pakistan was in Iran talking with the Iranian side. And we had Qatari delegations in Iran — I don't know what was the main reason. Today I asked Professor Miranda, what was that, what was the main reason? He said they had some regional talks with the Qatari delegation. And today, before coming to this live, we've learned that Donald Trump said to the Israeli Channel 12 that "I will not make any deal that is not good for Israel."

This is the sort of chaos that we're living in. Nobody knows if there will be some sort of attack. Last night, many people were talking about an attack coming. There were reports from Iraq and Syria that fighter jets were headed toward Iran. Nothing happened last night. I don't know if tonight we're going to have some sort of attack or some sort of announcement. But what I can say, in my opinion, is that what's not going to change is the Iranian position, because we are hearing over and over that they're saying our basic terms, our important terms, are still the same. They have not changed. Your understanding of what's going on?

## #Mark

Yeah, well, so first of all, you shouldn't really beat yourself up over the fact that you can't figure out whether Trump is going to bomb Iran again or not, because Trump doesn't know, right? I mean, they're obviously flailing around. This is not 5D chess, right? This is not some Trump master plan. This is them not knowing what to do, creating a lot of bluff and bluster, backing down, considering options, trying crazy plan A, crazy plan D, and looking for a way out of the situation that Trump has put himself into. And yeah, it's a zugzwang, to use the chess term. Anything he does will only make the situation worse. That's why they're flailing around like they are.

And they realize that bombing Iran again is probably 90% unlikely to change anything. They'll kill a few more Iranian leaders. They'll destroy some more stuff. But it's not going to make Iran capitulate.

It's not going to make them give in. It's not going to relinquish the Iranian hold over the Strait of Hormuz. But they don't have any other good options. They can't just take the L and walk away, right? Because Iran controls the Strait of Hormuz. As long as that is the situation... even Donald Trump can't spin that into a victory. I mean, at some point he may yet try, but it's extremely unlikely that he could pull that off. I fully expect him to eventually limp away from Iran at some point.

Right. He may bomb again for a while and then declare victory and walk away. But I expect him, on the way back from Iran, to beat up on Cuba just to make himself feel better, because Cuba is in the Western Hemisphere. It's low-hanging fruit. Right. Cuba doesn't have the military, the military assets, the geopolitical location, you know, all of these things that Iran has that make it so difficult for the U.S. to regime change Iran. Cuba lacks a lot of those, quite obviously. So yeah, Cuba may end up getting shafted by Trump's, shall we say, pent-up frustration over Iran on the way out the door. That is looking like a very real possibility.

Whether he bombs again or not, even he doesn't know at this point. He realizes that it probably won't change anything. He has at least some level of understanding of how low the Pentagon's inventories of air defense interceptors and of standoff munitions like the Tomahawk and the JASSM are. And he keeps promising to, you know, put Iran back into the Stone Age, to destroy their civilization, to bomb every bridge and power plant in the country. And he can't do that. They can't because they don't have the standoff munitions left to do that. Look, Russia has been hitting the Kiev regime's electrical infrastructure for, what, at least three years now?

And yes, it's teetering on the edge now, and they can tap it locally and knock it out when they want. They obviously don't want to destroy the whole thing. They haven't taken that action. But the point is, it took them a long period of time to destroy Ukraine's existing Soviet legacy air defense system, then to destroy the imported, haphazard Western air defense system that they brought in, then to start taking out the electrical infrastructure piece by piece. It took them years to do that. And yes, the U.S. has some more advanced air assets than Russia does, but not that much more advanced. And we heard, leaked from the Pentagon, from U.S. intelligence, on the pages of the New York Times, that the Air Force is afraid of Iran's detection and air defense capabilities, right?

That if they went into Iranian airspace to make use of the closer munitions that they have, rather than standoff munitions like the glide bombs, the JDAMs, which they do have many more of, then they would be putting their own air force at risk because Iran has various new weapons and air defense capabilities—first of all, air detection. And so my understanding of that is that it is a combination of infrared and, rather than active radar defense, which is easily detected and then homed in on, they're using a non-active detection that at least in part involves cameras that are placed all over the country at the sky, and the information is collated with artificial intelligence and filtered through.

And so this combination of infrared and this has given them a fairly good capacity to detect even the U.S.'s stealth capabilities—the F-35s and so on, the B-2s. And that, and they're still, you know,

obviously they still have enough air defense interceptor assets, you know, launch systems and interceptors that, you know, we saw all those U.S. planes fall out of the sky in the few days before the ceasefire started. And that, right, in the Western mainstream media. This is not coming from us in the alt media, right? This is coming from them. And they say, yeah, Iran has too much capability in that regard. And first of all, it's very interesting when you hear these things. We've heard a whole lot of leaks from U.S. intelligence and the military in the last couple of weeks.

They admit that Iran can probably outlast the U.S. blockade. They admit that Iran still has 70% plus of their missile, missile launch, drone capacity—everything. They admit that they have capable air defense. They admit that the Trump administration has no answer to their fast attack plans, swarm boats in the Hormuz. That's—whenever you get leaks like that, I mean, they confirm what we have known and we've been talking about—you, me, many other people on your show, right, across the alt media for the most part—they confirm, right, they vindicate what we've been saying for months now. But why? Why? Why are they leaking this? Why are they leaking this now? Who's leaking it? Whenever you get a leak like that, you have to ask who's leaking it and why.

And as best as I can tell, this is elements within the deep state, the U.S. deep state, right? Within the intelligence apparatus, within the Pentagon, right? That it is a desperate cry, warning what a bad situation the U.S. is in and trying to divert Trump from attacking again—not because they don't want to attack Iran, but because they believe that ultimately that will simply put the U.S. in an even worse position on the other end of it. Which is fascinating. I mean, that is a cry of what a bad situation they're in, that their own deep state, or at least elements of it—right, there's no monolithic deep state, right? There are many different factions within their deep state, within the blob.

## **#Nima**

Right. As Ben Rhodes called it, the foreign policy and security elite.

## **#Mark**

There are elements within it that are making a desperate cry to alert the public, to alert the media, and thus to try to put pressure on the Trump administration—don't do this thing, right? Don't attack Iran again, because it likely will not end well for us. We'll likely be in an even worse position, because it's certainly not out of a moral principle that they're leaking this, right? So that's all very fascinating. Every time, there have been so many of these leaks to the media from intelligence and from the military. And of course, it is all, again, we've been saying all of these things for a long period of time in the alt media. And they just are 180 degrees almost from the absolutely, you know, mad, unhinged, puerile, man-child rantings—megalomaniac man-child rantings—of Donald Trump.

And I don't know how well—I'm not a historian—but like many, I'm sure, out there in the audience, I am a history fan, right, a buff. And I particularly myself like ancient history. And I've come to the conclusion that Donald Trump is the Emperor Commodus of the Roman Empire. The one who used

to fight in—you know, the one that \*Gladiator\* was kind of fictionally pieced together out of various elements. But yeah, I mean, there were some elements that were kind of true in that. But I mean, the real Emperor Commodus, the one who used to, yes, fight in the Colosseum and everything. He is the U.S. Empire's Commodus. And after Commodus, the Roman Empire went straight down and never came back, right?

## **#Nima**

Not for any significant period of time.

## **#Mark**

And I'm convinced, you know, we know that history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes. Well, yeah, Trump and Commodus, you know, I could very much see him as a reincarnation, if you will, in historical terms, of that creature. And this is the U.S. I mean, we saw, of course, I've lost a lot of respect over the past couple of years for Tulsi Gabbard, but Tulsi Gabbard has now obviously stepped down under pressure, under protest. And, you know, I'm fairly certain, and I don't think it's too controversial to say that she has tried to prevent Trump from launching a second—do we want to call it round two, round three, round four?

## **#Nima**

Round three, yeah.

## **#Mark**

Round three. All right, let's call it round three. It all depends on when you start the counting. But let's call it round three that Tulsi Gabbard obviously objects to, or is warning against it if she doesn't object to it. And, you know, for the U.S.'s own interests. And she's gone now, and one of her top deputies also stepped down in the last week. So a whole lot of defections happening from the Trump administration as they...

## **#Nima**

Mark, just breaking news that we've learned from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, that they expect a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States could be announced as soon as tomorrow. Go ahead. They were saying the same thing.

## **#Mark**

Last week and the week before that. So maybe. Right. But I wouldn't count it. I do not believe that any U.S. president can accept Iran's terms. Donald Trump or not, I don't think that any U.S.

president put in the same situation could accept Iran's terms. So they can't do that. They can't take the L and walk away. What else do they have left but to roll the crap dice, to take that risk, no matter how unlikely it is, and hope that some black swan event comes out the other end of it and improves their situation by dropping a few more bombs? Because that's what the U.S. does.

## **#Nima**

That's what they do.

## **#Mark**

They don't seem to have any CIA or Mossad options left. If they had them, they probably already would have used them. So now they've just got, you know, the bombs, the standoff munitions, and so forth, and they haven't achieved anything yet. And, you know, maybe they'll kill Mojtaba Khamenei. Maybe they'll take out, you know, another round of the heads of the IRGC and so forth. If they bomb again, almost certainly that's what they would try to do. And then they would try to claim it's the second regime change. And then if things don't change, they would still say, well, we've removed the regime and we've bombed them and they don't have anything left, and we're going to walk away.

We're done, and wipe their hands of the affair. That's a real possibility. Now, if they were more sane, they might at this point just do that without bombing again. But I don't think that they're sane. I don't think that they're logical or rational, so it would be a mistake to think that, to reason that a sane person would walk away now before the situation gets worse. But they're not sane people. So, it's always dangerous to try to put yourself into the thought process of someone who is not sane, not rational. But unfortunately, that's what we need to do, you know, as analysts and journalists, you know, covering this.

And yeah, it's, let's say, it's precarious to our own sanity to do that too much. Don't look too long, too deeply into the abyss. Let the abyss stare back at you. But, you know, that's what we've got to do. So I don't see any good options for the U.S. Nothing has changed. We're still in this geoeconomic game of chicken, you know, this hurtling towards the precipice or towards each other, however you want to term it. And Iran is in their economy, and Trump is stuck driving the global economy affected by the global energy crisis. And we keep getting closer and closer to that cliff. And even U.S. intelligence told us last week that Iran will outlast this attempted U.S. blockade.

They've got too many other options now. They're, of course, still getting ships out, again hugging the Pakistani, the Indian coasts, land trade routes over Pakistan, the Caspian Sea route, trains that cut through Turkmenistan from China down to Iran. They've just got too many possibilities. You can strain their economy, there's no question about that, that you can cause them to get less oil out in tankers than they were before. But of course, at this point, getting less oil out is hurting the global economy as well. That's the conundrum. So they're hurting themselves in that regard and shortening

their own timer, right, to the precipice. No good options. I don't... you know, unless they've got a magic Death Star or something.

And evidently, even the Europeans are so worried that we now know what we were thinking when Trump started going off a few weeks ago about, you know, ending Iranian civilization. They were worried. European leaders were worried he might start using nukes out of frustration. And that even the Europeans were afraid of that. Now, we talked about that at the time, you know, that it was a scary possibility, but one that you couldn't discount. But that is still a possibility, of course. We like to think that some U.S. generals would restrain and prevent Trump from doing that, not obey his orders. But we don't know that. We don't know that. So it's... you know, we're all, right now, waiting for the next insane megalomaniac social media rant from this unhinged man.

We're breathless. Oh, Trump is canceling his—he's not attending his son's wedding. He's not doing his weekend golf routine because he's in the White House, right? It's almost surreal, right? You know, the world that we find ourselves in. And they say that no, there's a constant argument in international relations about the role of individuals, about agency, right, versus systems, versus institutions, versus the weight of history and culture and these things. But how can you say that, you know, even if it's not the final determinant, that an absolutely powerful and power-mad country figure, unhinged like Donald Trump, you know, isn't creating this chaotic situation by himself, you know, to a very large degree.

## **#Nima**

And so we're all...

## **#Mark**

You know, this foreign policy by social media is almost becoming normal to us now. Already, just over a year, not even a year and a half into his presidency.

## **#Nima**

And we're all taking it, you know, as normal at this point. It's already become.

## **#Mark**

Other leaders are doing it as well. The Iranians are doing it, right? Everything is now part of this global public theater that events are being played out on. And of course, when you're performing for the audience like that, you are also, however consciously or unconsciously, changing your own behavior because you are in a public theater now. That does not give me a warm fuzzy about the situation that we're in now, because that is not actually a good thing. It makes it harder for people to back down. It makes it harder for concessions. It makes you more likely to jump to a knee-jerk

emotional response to some provocation because your own emotions, public, right, get upset over a situation.

So it's so unstable. It's such a dangerous situation. You know, the other great powers, Russia and China, of course, are sitting behind this and they're backing Iran quietly. And in Russia's case, maybe not so quietly anymore. You know, we're being told in the Western media that all sorts of things that Iran and Hezbollah are doing now are, you know, being helped or provided by Russia. And we can only, you know, speculate about whether that's true or not. But Russia and China are not only backing Iran to various degrees, but they're also very, very worried about this situation spinning out of all kinds of control, both economically and, of course, in the military field as well.