

Col. Larry Wilkerson: How a Middle East Spark Could Ignite Global War

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#Nima

What has happened last night and the night before—the confrontation between Iran and the United States firing at each other—it was started by U.S. fighter jets attacking speedboats in the Persian Gulf. Four of those sailors were killed. And then we had the Iranian response with anti-ship missiles. And then the escalation coming back and forth, and you see finally Iran hitting one of the MQ-9 drones, which was hit by the Iranian air defense system. And then later on, it was so close to hitting one of those F-35s. It seems some of the reports show that one of the F-35s, together with another drone, was somehow getting hit by the air defense system. We are not talking about a war. We are talking about two countries right now negotiating, talking to each other, and at the same time fighting. What is that? What kind of norm is that? And what do you make of it?

#Larry

Well, it's the Trump method of diplomacy. It's a method that I think is pretty obvious to the world now, particularly with the case of Iran and the United States. We get into diplomacy and we feel like that part of diplomacy—the only way we can operate anymore, Nima—is sanctions and military force, military force and sanctions. And we get in the middle of diplomacy, such as it is. It isn't real diplomacy. And if they're not adhering to our points the way we want them to adhere, or we want to move them a certain direction, we start the bombing over again. We start the kinetic action over again. That's the only way we know how to negotiate, the only way we know how to deal.

And we're teaching the world, in many respects, this sort of technique, so we can expect it back at us—if not soon, more so than not. And it's a terrible precedent we're setting. First of all, if you look at this very closely, there has been no contact between an Iranian diplomat or an Iranian government representative, or both, and an American of equivalent stature. There simply hasn't, because we've put no diplomats forward. There are no diplomats dealing with this. There are only people like Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff. And I don't even include Marco Rubio in what I would call a diplomat. He's made it clear that he's not a diplomat.

He's an advocate of bombs, bullets, bayonets, and sanctions. Just typical of the empire. So this is the strangest diplomacy. At no point in time since we commenced this, quote, diplomacy, unquote, have we actually talked with Iranians, nor they with us. Probably at their behest on their side, or their decision on their side, because they don't trust us worth a crap, and certainly because Trump won't let anybody talk directly with Iranians. So what are we doing? We're doing diplomacy through good offices, or at least a reasonable facsimile thereof. And good offices are being offered by disparate entities like the UAE, Pakistan, Oman—the usual one—and others, Riyadh.

So there's no diplomacy going on, Nima, period. There is no diplomacy going on. There's only a pronouncement here and a pronouncement there. And then a Bibi in the center saying, I don't like that, I'll start the bombing again in Lebanon, or I'll do something else on tour. One of the things—open parentheses here, let's take an aside—one of the things I'm really watching what Bibi's doing for is if I'm right that Epstein's files, so to speak, really are being used to influence Donald Trump, principally because of Melania's exposure in those files. I don't know if it's Trump himself at all, but it's certainly Melania. If they're being used, why is Bibi not wielding them now a little more adroitly?

And my conclusion can only be, it ain't Bibi that has them. It's Mossad. And Mossad is growing increasingly tired of Bibi Netanyahu. So maybe now we have a different situation with regard to the most powerful tool that Bibi has to use against Trump, because Bibi's in trouble politically and otherwise within his own coalition, and certainly within the state of Israel, particularly with the Knesset. So is Mossad now withholding that blackmail evidence, so to speak, and not letting Bibi threaten with it? Why didn't he come to the United States like he normally does and address the Congress, and essentially from the Congress tell Trump to go to hell or try to modify his behavior?

Because Trump seems to have found something with which he's using it to make Netanyahu do more of what he wants him to do. Part of that is Miriam Adelson, I'm told, has said she doesn't like Bibi anymore, and she would like someone else in charge in Israel, and so she's not bringing the pressure to bear on him. Is Mossad not bringing the pressure to bear or allowing Netanyahu to bring the pressure to bear from the Epstein blackmail files? What is going on? Because it looks as if there is at least a prima facie breach between what Bibi wants and what Trump wants, most notably signified now by his going on the march in Lebanon.

He's going north very fast, or trying to. And he's taking on Lebanese citizens and civilians. He's not caring about whether it's Hezbollah or it's Lebanese civilians. He's just killing everything in his path, destroying it. The IDF is, in some ways, I don't think, if you read Haaretz's headlines today, I'm not sure the IDF is all that happy with what they're doing. So this is the most important ingredient in this relationship that I can't parse right now accurately. I just can't. What is happening in the relationship between Bibi and Trump, and Trump and Bibi? Because my estimate was that we were going back to war. And we were going to do as we've done before.

We're in the third diplomatic window, if you will, that we've been in. Every window before, all of them, two of them, we attacked in the middle of them. My opinion was we were going to attack again, ruthlessly, Israel at our flank in the middle of these negotiations. That's the most propitious point to do so, where Hegseth, Kaine, Trump feel like the Iranians are convinced that this is moving diplomatically and that the military force will only be ancillary to it, if at all. Now we are going to hit them again. That's what I said. We're going to hit them hard to no purpose, no effect. But I can't figure it out now. I just don't know what we're doing.

I think I'm looking at Admiral Bradley Cooper's testimony before the House of Representatives, particularly his responses to Seth Moulton, and I think it was Jason Crow, maybe a couple of other people, where Cooper made an ass of himself, an absolute ass of himself. I would have taken him aside if he was at Newport, Rhode Island, at the Naval War College, performing on the game floor with me, and he said what he said back to Seth Moulton. And he said things are going according to plan. Wrong, Admiral. That's not the comment you want to give. "Things going according to plan" means nothing. No plan outlasts contact with the enemy. What you want to answer is, are you accomplishing your mission? And oh, by the way, Admiral...

What is your mission? And see what he says. See what he says. Because Kaine comes in later with Hegseth and gets asked similar questions and can't tell them what the mission is. So what is the mission, Donald Trump? Mr. President, what is the mission you gave to your military through Pete Hegseth and General Kaine to accomplish? I bet you Trump can't answer that question. What is the mission? To bring the Iranians to their knees? Failed. To destroy Iran? Failed. To destroy their ballistic missiles? Failed. To stop the nuclear program? Failed. Nothing that could be articulated as a mission right now has been accomplished by the vaunted, finest, best military on the face of the earth, according to Donald Trump. So where are we in this, Mr. President?

I know one thing we're at. We're at a point where you are mentally distraught because you can't find a way out. And is that what you're doing now? And what is that going to produce? There was a wonderful episode chronicled in an article this morning in War on the Rocks by an old friend of mine, Jason Dempsey, who was a lieutenant in Colin Powell's office from West Point on their fellowship program. And then later, a White House fellow, worked for Obama's wife, Michelle, worked on veterans' issues for her, got out of the military. And another gentleman, a soldier or a Marine, spent a lot of time in combat, and they wrote an article this morning. They wrote it in, let's see, War on the Rocks, and the title of it was "How Does Canceling a Command-Initiated Review Support a Culture of Accountability?"

Now, that's a very important article, in the sense that when Representative George Whitesides asked Hegseth, who immediately couldn't answer the question, he shifted it to General Kaine, the chairman who was sitting beside him. What is happening with this situation? The situation is that two Apache helicopters, armed to the teeth, flew beside the No Kings event in Nashville. Message there, right? A message there. They weren't supposed to be there. Then they flew over to this guy—what's his

name? The guy who does the MAGA stuff all the time—Kid Rock. They flew over to Kid Rock's house, and they, you know, said hello to Kid Rock. Two Apache helicopters out of Fort Campbell, I suppose. So what did the Army do? They did the right thing.

They opened an immediate investigation. What are these two helicopters doing, straying into civilian airspace and looking threatening toward this No Kings event in Nashville? What are they doing doing that? And then what are they doing going over to Kid Rock's house, who is a very, very strong supporter of MAGA and of Donald Trump? And what is Pete Hegseth doing later? Inviting them to Washington, all to have a kind of little party. So the Army opens what's called a 15-6 investigation into this, and they're trying to figure out what's going on here because this shouldn't be happening with lethal equipment like Apache helicopters. Indeed, it shouldn't be happening with any Army equipment. What happens when he's asked about this?

Hegseth is asked about this. He doesn't answer. It shifts quickly. The congressman, Representative Whitesides, shifts it to Kaine, and Kaine answers like this: "What you are alluding to is a partisan question." Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for telling me the truth. What you're talking about is doing something because it's political. That's not what the Army is supposed to be doing. That's why they opened the investigation. So return to the fundamental question: what do you mean by stopping a command-ordered investigation in an incident that, on the surface, looks like it was not too good and outside the UCMJ? What are you doing ordering that investigation stopped? Because that's what Hegseth did. That's where we are.

That's where we are, especially in the Defense Department. And I talked to Jason this morning, one of the authors, emailed back and forth, what's going on here? Why are we in a situation now where the Eisenhower Media Network, for example—I told Jason—we're debating things like what's happening to our military? What is being done to the military? How is it being shaped by Hegseth, by these prayer meetings, by these National Mall ceremonies that the Speaker of the House, Marco Rubio, Hegseth go to? They're all about Jesus, and all about Christianity—per excess version of Christianity. What are we doing? Are we shaping the military to be a part of, a willing part of, or at least a stand-aside part of, a coming coup?

Is that what we're doing? This is not good. It's not good. And it's part of the warp and woof of what's happening domestically inside the United States now. But this is a reflection of what's happening overseas, because how can you expect a military that is so convoluted in its allegiance, if you will, and then has not got a real mission or real operational environment in which it can do anything other than bomb and bomb again? How do you do that? How do you get to any objective? How do you accomplish any mission? And by the way, Admiral, by the way, all you people, what is your mission? Just tell me what your mission is.

Is your mission to drop bombs on Iran whenever the president of the United States tells you to? What kind of mission is that? Missions usually have, if they're smartly done, two parts. First of all, what's the kinetic thing you're asking me to do? In this case, it's drop bombs. And what's the

purpose? You don't have a mission unless you have both of those components. What's the purpose of dropping the bombs? To bring the Iranian regime to its knees. Well, you're not doing that. In fact, you're making it more resolute, as indicated every day by what they're doing and what they're capable of doing. Look at what they've said now about Lebanon. You go ahead, Mr. Netanyahu.

Every attack you do in Lebanon will be responded to by us attacking the UAE. We will go after the UAE until there's no UAE left, as long as you're in Lebanon attacking. Because they're the most closely allied state with you that's close to us. So that's the deal we're giving you. What are you doing, American military? What's your purpose for being there other than dropping bombs, other than going around and killing, destroying the Iranian Navy, destroying the Iranian Air Force? For what freaking purpose? Well, we want to go in and get the uranium. Well, you failed at that. You haven't done it. Are you preparing to do it again? Tell me a new mission statement then. I could go on and on, but from a military professional's point of view, this is a freaking disaster.

#Nima

Larry, Israel is going beyond that yellow line that they have defined in the southern part of Lebanon. They're going beyond it.

#Larry

They're going beyond it in Gaza too. They're killing people every day. You cross the yellow line, you're dead. What were you crossing the yellow line for? Well, you moved it. Yesterday it was over there. We moved it so we could get you today. Great technique for killing Palestinians. No, I'm sorry. Go ahead. You were talking about Lebanon.

#Nima

You know, the yellow line is somehow ridiculous. The whole concept of the yellow line is ridiculous.

#Larry

Please, thank you. It is. It's ridiculous. It's a tool for killing people. That's all it is. We're going to paint a line on the ground tonight at 2 a.m., and tomorrow morning, if we catch anybody on this side of the line, we're going to kill them. Then tomorrow night at 3 a.m., we're going to paint the line about 50 meters further north, and if we catch anybody on the south side, we're going to kill them. And meanwhile, we're going to walk our way all the way to Beirut.

#Nima

I think the main reason they're doing this, Larry, right now, every time they feel that the United States is about to do something to get out of the Middle East, they're doing something in Lebanon to

keep them there, to intensify the situation, to worsen the situation. And that's why the United States may be... They're trying to force them into some sort of position, but...

#Larry

Meanwhile, Erdoğan is parading his ballistic missiles outside Ankara and looking down south and saying, ooh, this is not good. I think I might get involved in this sooner or later. Keep coming, Israel. Keep coming.

#Nima

I think that's true. Many people are arguing that Erdoğan is sending oil and sending things to Israel, but after all, we know the sort of public opinion in Turkey, how they hate Israel and what they're doing in Gaza and Lebanon. This is not something that can change. The government in Turkey can't change it. That's the reality. That's why when you see the reports that Benjamin Netanyahu went to the UAE during the war, the UAE is coming out and denying that because they know how people are feeling about Israel.

#Larry

That's the reality. You bet. Now they've been singled out by Iran. They've been made a quid pro quo: you attack in Lebanon, we attack the UAE. And frankly, even though Lebanon's been pounded by Israel mercilessly, there's probably more targets left in Lebanon than in the UAE. So it wouldn't be too hard to finish the UAE off.

#Nima

But they're so desperate with this case of FPV drones, Larry. They have no solution for that. That's why, you know, we had Smotrich talking about, with every drone, we're going to bring down 10 buildings in Beirut.

#Larry

That's Israeli strategy or tactics. That's the way they operate. If you kill one Israeli, we kill 100 Palestinians. If you kill one Israeli, we kill 50 Hezbollah. And by the way, as we're killing them, we'll tear down 100 Lebanese homes. That's the way they operate.

#Nima

Then they have to get out of Lebanon. What are they doing in Lebanon?

#Larry

That's the reason I think maybe we might be seeing some action by Erdoğan that heretofore has not been in the cards. Because this is becoming almost an affront to him and to Turkey in general, that all of this is going on just a slight distance away to the south, and he's doing nothing about it. And like you said, instead, and this is known to most Turks, like you said, he's still doing things that make Netanyahu's life easier, like selling him oil.