US & Iran Open New War Front, 7 Drones SINK Russian Warship | Lt. Col Anthony Aguilar

Anthony Aguilar is a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, a Special Forces Green Beret who served as a combat infantry officer for 25 years. Subscribe for more in-depth geopolitical analysis! Leave your thoughts in the comments below! Support the Channel: Patreon: https://www.patreon.com/dannyhaiphong SUBSCRIBE ON RUMBLE: Rumble: https://rumble.com/c/DannyHaiphong Follow Me on Social Media: Twitter: https://twitter.com/DannyHaiphong Telegram: https://t.me/DannyHaiphong Support the channel in other ways: https://www.buymeacoffee.com/dannyhaiphong Substack: chroniclesofhaiphong.substack.com Cashapp: $Dhaiphong Venmo: @dannyH2020 Paypal: https://paypal.me/spiritofho #iranwar #trump #israel #usmilitary

#Danny

Welcome back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I am joined by former Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Aguilar to go over the latest developments. Well, it's really good to see you. It seems like new fronts of war are opening up, Anthony, and I wanted to begin with this. This is the imagery that Volodymyr Zelensky has shared of seven drones that reportedly sank a Russian warship in the Libyan port of Benghazi yesterday. And on top of that, it seems Ukraine has also attacked an Iranian cargo ship in Libya as well. So, major escalations here by Ukraine against both Iran and Russia. This comes as the U.S. and Iran appear to be at a standoff in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran says it's going to use all means to end the U.S. blockade, as Trump has dared Iran to break the blockade with threats of sinking its ships. Now, as there are talks about a new Israeli government, Netanyahu is considering striking Iran without direct U.S. support, as Donald Trump reportedly has delayed strikes until the new year, Anthony. What do you make of these developments? Maybe you can first comment on what happened vis-à-vis Ukraine and Russia, and I guess we can say Iran as well. The United States and NATO, of course, have to have a big hand in this, correct? Your thoughts? Well, absolutely.

#Anthony Aguilar

What we saw was the escalation between Ukraine and Russia over the weekend, with the strikes on the Sparta 2, which is a Russian vessel in the Gulf of Finland, and then the striking of the Kaliningrad enclave directly, which has always been a red line—a do-not-cross condition for Russia. And now,

down here in Libya—you know, here's Ukraine way up here, right? Here's Libya, here's Benghazi, where we saw strikes sinking and attacking the Russian vessels there. So, you know, what we saw there was Ukraine using their uncrewed vessel. They call it a drone boat, whatever you will.

But you can see these are quite large. These aren't something you would be able to move easily from Ukraine, where they are manufactured, whether in parts or pieces. But if you wanted to move them by sea on a different boat to get to the port of Benghazi and establish your attack here, you'd have to go through the Black Sea, the Bosphorus Strait, and the Aegean Sea. You'd cross through all of these NATO countries. So this attack that we've seen was against the Russian vessel, the Ascalon, which is a roll-on, roll-off, heavy-carrying vessel, different from your container ships.

It can carry containers, but what's different is that with a roll-on, roll-off vessel, or what they refer to as "ro-ro," you can move vehicles. You can drive things directly onto and off it without having to have specialized equipment. So it's very versatile. Also attacked was the Russian Mercury, which is a corvette-class vessel in the Russian Navy. So that was struck as well. And when you're looking at these strikes, what's being conducted is absolutely an expansion of the war on the Ukrainian front. But this is not Ukraine. This is NATO. This is NATO doing this, perhaps with Ukrainian equipment, perhaps with Ukrainian buy-in.

Perhaps, you know, it was Ukraine's plan. But this is not a Ukrainian attack. This is a NATO attack. This is NATO expanding this conflict from the front in Ukraine and Russia to what we're now seeing in northern Africa. Through the actors and the geography, that directly links it to the conflict between Iran and the United States, but also between Yemen and Saudi Arabia, with Ansar Allah's control of the Bab al-Mandab therefore influencing the Suez Canal, which goes into the Mediterranean, right next door to Benghazi. Here's the Suez Canal, here's Egypt, there's Benghazi.

So these conflicts have not only expanded, they're now merging to the point where we have all the same actors, the same sides, now taking on an expanded role in the indirect and direct fighting in each of these wars. And that's very concerning, very concerning. And of course, with Donald Trump saying, "We're going to renew strikes after the new year," this is very reminiscent of him saying, "We're going to renew strikes," or, "We're going to end this once and for all after the midterms." We're going to strike after New Year's now. We know that Israel has presented plans for unilateral attacks on Iran.

They presented these plans back on the 10th of October, before the Israeli midterms, before the U. S. midterms. And that same plan was presented to Pete Hegseth when he traveled to Israel to visit Ovda Air Base, which is more of their secret, classified facility where Mossad operates, where there's a CIA base, et cetera. They met there to talk about escalation or resuming attacks. So the plans are on the table. I absolutely think that Israel is going to attack unilaterally, or with U.S. support, or unilaterally followed by U.S. support, because we always go in to support Israel because they start things they can't finish.

That's all coming to a head before the new year because the deadline for forming a government in Israel is December 6th. And in that time, Netanyahu is still in charge. He still holds power. So time is running out. I don't see this being pushed off until after the new year. I think we're going to see confrontation and escalation between Israel and Iran, and also over the attempt to break the blockade, with direct confrontation between the U.S. Navy and the Iranian Navy. And it's just going to continue to escalate. And now we're in this period of exponential escalation where it's just a matter of time. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when.

#Danny

Right. And there's some breaking news on the Ukrainian front here. It appears that Russia has struck the presidential office in Ukraine with a drone. Now, Zelensky wasn't in the area at the time, but it's a pretty clear message.

#Anthony Aguilar

That sounds like a pretty clear message. Yeah.

#Danny

Yeah. And there are also ongoing strikes, both on Kiev and on the broader front now, too, because they promised a severe response. But on both of these fronts, you have Iran now saying that they are going to break the blockade. Many people thought over the last day and a half or so that this operation to break the blockade was beginning. It appears that it hasn't necessarily begun just yet, but Iran is vowing that they are going to escalate militarily in a much wider way if the United States strikes its tankers as they head out of their ports and out of the Gulf of Oman toward their destinations. So, your thoughts on this? Could this be a hair trigger that forces the United States to either let the blockade just end without a deal, or will it create a larger escalation? Because Iran has been very patient in this particular area of the war, this naval war. Your thoughts on that?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, I think Iran has demonstrated quite a bit of restraint in not immediately escalating in response to the blockade. And to be clear, a naval blockade of a sovereign nation's ports is an act of war. It is absolutely an act of war by international treaty, by international law, by maritime law. A naval blockade of another nation's ports is an act of war. So the United States is engaging in an act of war in an active war. And, you know, Iran has been quite restrained in terms of attacking or focusing kinetic efforts against this blockade. Over the weekend, with the promise from Iran to break the blockade, we heard about this ship, the Qat Shakan, or the Line Breaker. We now know that that ship never existed.

Its whole backstory about loading up at Kharg Island, its 12-hour journey, being eight hours—or however many hours—from reaching the blockade, and then it just disappeared. It didn't exist. It wasn't even a real ship. It was this total fake-out, if you will. But then what's interesting is that there's a real ship that's been breaking the blockade. And this resulted in strikes against this vessel and strikes against Chabahar port in southern Iran, near the Pakistan border, yesterday. And, you know, this ship is the Paya Lebar. This is that ship. So, the Paya Lebar is a very large container ship. What's interesting about this particular ship is that in July of 2026, the U.S. Treasury added it to the OFAC—the Office of Foreign Assets Control—SDN list, the Specially Designated Nationals list, meaning it's sanctioned.

It's a sanctioned ship. It used to fly the flag of Antigua and Barbuda. It changed that to a Comoros flag. It's been, you know, shifting its identity. It operates out of Iran's Chabahar port. And back in April, the U.S. allowed its waiver for India from the sanctions on this port to expire and didn't renew it, therefore renewing the sanctions on this particular vessel. Well, that vessel, the Paya Lebar—if you look at the UKMTO, or the UK Maritime Trade Operations, traffic for this ship—here's Qatar, inside the Persian Gulf. You know, here are all the stops it's made.

It's come out, you know, way out to here. This is traffic over months. This ship has been going in and out of the blockade. And where that red dot was on the map here, showing where it comes out, is where, you know, eventually it will turn off its transponder or turn it back on, depending on whether it's coming or going. We're now getting into this scenario, much like in World War II with German unrestricted submarine warfare, where you had military vessels disguised as commercial ships or commercial ships carrying military material, and the Germans striking everything at will. This is what that area in the Gulf of Oman, where this blockade is, is now becoming.

And when you take that with the escalation that Israel is suggesting and clearly intending with the blockade, with the strikes that we also saw just last week against the two U.S. radar systems in Bahrain that Iran struck, the president of the United States seemingly doesn't want to do anything. But the reality of the war is happening in real time, every minute of every day. This road to war is on a collision course with all of these things that are happening. There is now a great risk of pulling NATO, Ukraine, and Russia directly into this regional conflict, which would then connect it to the already ongoing regional conflict in Europe.

#Danny

The last time that Ukraine hit an Iranian ship, Iran made a very strong threat that it would strike back, and Ukraine immediately apologized and engaged in, I guess you would call it diplomacy, and that cooled tensions. But what do you make of Ukraine getting involved on this front now? Because we all know that the U.S. and NATO have been the suppliers, the logistical supporters, and that Ukraine really is not acting on its own when it does this. So why would it be in the interest of NATO or the United States to provoke Iran in this way, given that the situation appears to be that Ukraine

is trying to provoke Russia or target Russia in an expanded way outside of the battlefront, for whatever reason? And you can comment on that as well, because that's been a pattern now, whether it's attacks on Russia or now outside of Russia, in the Libyan port. This has been a tactic by Ukraine to move outside of the front lines and into expanded and internationally unsanctioned waters and territories.

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, like I said earlier, just as much as this is a Ukrainian action, this is a NATO action. We know that Ukraine has support from NATO. Ukraine has support from the United States. U.S. support for Ukraine has been waning. Zelensky has said that he wants more support and has asked why the U. S. is turning its back on Ukraine. In my opinion, NATO wants a conflict. NATO wants a direct confrontation with Russia, but they want it to start from something that already exists so they can then say, "Well, now we have to get involved." Trump has wanted more support from NATO countries in what's happening in Iran from the very beginning.

From the very beginning of this conflict, Trump has been saying, you know, "NATO, you should be joining us. You should be worrying about the Strait of Hormuz more than we are." So what we're seeing is that you have independent objectives, you have independent national interests, but then you have collective national interests. And existing conflicts are now being used to bring those interests forward in direct confrontation with these same belligerents. By "belligerents," I mean all sides, you know: the United States, Israel, and Iran are belligerents in that regional conflict; Russia and Ukraine are belligerents in that conflict.

And then you see how each of these collective and individual interests is being used: "You do this, and we'll help you with this," or, you know, "We're going to do this because we want to draw you into this," depending on which actor is acting. They're all directly connected there, you know. There is no separation between what Ukraine has now done in Libya, in Benghazi, and the strikes that they' ve carried out, and a NATO action. It's absolutely supported and condoned and given the green light by NATO. So, you know, they're just all organically and inherently and deeply connected. It just depends on which actor is acting, or which collective actor is acting on whose behalf. But at any given time, in the background of it, it's all connected.

#Danny

Right. Yes. And now, Anthony, I wanted to ask you about this idea. You know, the trilateral summit happened between Putin, Xi, and Trump, and a lot of people were saying, well, that is a positive move to avert a world war, a global confrontation between these powers. But when I look at what's happening with Iran and Russia, even with just these kinds of attacks, it appears that these conflicts are already global in nature. What do you make of the ways in which NATO and the United States

are expanding these conflicts outside of their initial targets? I mean, of course, the Iran war has already blown up globally in so many different ways. But what are your thoughts on whether we already are in that global war scenario and what that means?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, we clearly are already in this global war scenario in terms of the existing conflicts, the emerging conflicts, the ongoing conflicts, and how these conflicts are crossing into each other's spheres. This is already that global conflict. We have China and Russia providing support to Iran. We have the direct confrontation between Russia and Ukraine that's now spilling over into northern Africa, into the Mediterranean. We have the indirect conflict between the United States and China that's been ongoing economic warfare, global economic warfare. We have the conflict in Yemen, with Ansar Allah fighting Saudi-backed forces in Yemen, and the direct confrontations with Saudi forces in Saudi Arabia.

We have what's happening in Gaza. We have the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. We have further Israeli incursions into Syria. We have, you know, the Strait of Bab al-Mandab and how that now directly involves Egypt because of the Suez Canal, as well as the Horn of Africa. All of these conflicts are now, you know, one degree of separation from being directly connected to each other. So if you look at a chart of all of these conflicts, you can connect them all clearly. At one point, it may have been six degrees of separation, four degrees of separation. And now these conflicts are simply one degree of separation apart.

And in some cases, they're one and the same. So that global conflict is already upon us. It's already happening. This is very reminiscent of what Barbara Tuchman wrote in The Guns of August about World War I and the conditions leading into it. If you studied those conditions at the time and throughout history, you could see that the path to World War I was inevitable. You know, there are certain incidents in history that we point to and say, "Well, that was the start of World War I," or "That incident sparked World War I." But all of that—the energy, the actors, and the degrees of separation between already existing and ongoing conflicts—was already present.

You look at this, and it's very similar to that. I'm not going to say it's exactly the same, because nothing in history is exactly the same. History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. And looking at where we are now, perhaps the attacks in Benghazi can be seen as very similar to what the United States did in expanding the front in Northern Africa during World War II because of where Germany was getting a lot of its oil. You know, we called the Mediterranean and Northern Africa the soft underbelly of the war, the soft underbelly of the European front.

So now, in the same way, this conflict is being expanded to the exposed underbelly of Russia, beyond the Caspian Sea, beyond the Black Sea, and now into the Mediterranean. And, you know, we're already in that global conflict environment. Now, will there be events that will then set off that explosion within this already existing reality? I think we're headed towards that with the Strait of

Hormuz or with Israel striking and attacking Iran in the coming days. We're very close to that—the explosion within this already existing sphere of conflict. As I said, I don't think it's a matter of if. I think it's a matter of when.

#Danny

Well, we know that U.S. and NATO elites, the elites in Washington, have had goals of destabilizing, even dismembering, both Russia and Iran for many years now. But how do these kinds of attacks fit into that? Because obviously, right now, the United States is relying heavily on the blockade of Iran and is now expanding the Ukraine conflict beyond the borders of Ukraine and Russia and into international waters. How does this fit in? Is it effective at all?

#Anthony Aguilar

It's effective in the immediacy of it happening. Now, what's the effect beyond the immediate incident itself? "Oh, look, we struck this. Oh, look, we struck that. We have the ability to do this beyond the front lines." That then provoked strikes from Russia, sending a message back to Ukraine. So in the time and space in which it happens, it's effective in that moment. That doesn't necessarily mean it's effective beyond that in helping the country that did it achieve whatever its strategic aim is. So let's take Ukraine, for example, working with NATO, or through NATO, or as a proxy of NATO to do this—because remember, Ukraine is not a member of NATO. Was this an operation that was designed more to be psychological, with less of a direct impact on the war itself, but more of a psychological impact in terms of, "Look, we can strike here. We struck Kaliningrad"?

"You tell us not to, we're gonna do it anyway. You know, cards are on the table, and look, we can strike in all these places." Or does Ukraine have a greater objective in striking certain vessels or ships—not just to have this psychological impact, but to actually negatively impact Russia's ability to continue to operate as a nation amidst this war, you know, with trade or commerce or exports or imports in other areas of the world where it operates? Both could be true. It could be one or the other. So when you look at the implications of this, there are immediate and tangible impacts. It doesn't mean that those immediate, tangible impacts are actually going to affect the strategic outcome, if there is even one attached to it. It's the same thing we're seeing with Iran. The Strait of Hormuz has now become the issue in...

#Anthony Aguilar

In the conflict, prior to the war starting on 28 February, reopening the Strait of Hormuz wasn't a consideration. It wasn't an objective because it wasn't closed. So that's now become a key part of this entire conflict. And what we're seeing now, with merchant vessels being attacked or hitting mines or being sunk, whether they're struck by the U.S. or struck by Iran, is that it's now expanding.

Does striking those ships necessarily have a direct impact on the ability to move oil and commerce through the Strait of Hormuz in the future, in terms of who controls it? Or does it have an immediate psychological effect of, "Don't do this, or else"?

Again, both can be true. And I think we're seeing this in both regions: in Ukraine, in Russia, now in the Mediterranean, in Bab al-Mandab and in Yemen, in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. It's all happening in real time before our eyes, both in terms of the immediate impact of the action and what we're now seeing over time: how those impacts influence the strategies involved. Whether it's the U.S. strategy, which there seems to be a clear lack of, or Iran's strategy of asymmetric attrition and time-bound warfare, or Ukraine and Russia expanding the front or merely seeking a psychological effect, it's all right before us, happening in real time.

And in some of these cases, we won't know, because sometimes an action taken with the thought that, “Oh, this will just have an immediate impact,” does have strategic implications that were unforeseen when that operation was conducted. So we're seeing it unfold in real time. I can only assess what I see happening in real time, but I do think that the intended immediate effect of the expansion of Russia and Ukraine's conflict was psychological. But it clearly has spilled over now into real impacts back on the Ukraine-Russia front, where Russia is now striking Kiev once again. So sometimes intended actions have unintended consequences. And we see that every day in this region.

#Danny

Russia turned the conflict in Ukraine into a war of attrition long ago, and we are now over four years into that, heading into the fifth this coming February. Is the United States trying to do this with regard to Iran? And is that even possible? Because Mostafa Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, has said that there needs to be an elimination of this “no war, no peace” dynamic that has taken place over the last several months, arguably since the MOU was signed. What do you make of this? Is this even possible for the United States to do? And if so, is this now transitioning into a kind of effort to grind Iran down until it ends up like Syria? If you look at the landscape, is that even possible? Is that even a relevant example?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, you know, it's often quite striking to me as I reflect on our operations in Syria that started in 2014. They were promised to be very quick, very limited, very focused on a very specific objective: ISIS and the caliphate. And years after the killing of al-Baghdadi and the territorial defeat of the caliphate, as proclaimed by the United States in March of 2019, we're still there.

#Anthony Aguilar

The idea that the war between the United States and Iran is going to end simply because Donald Trump says it's over—that is not reality. To think that the war is just going to drag on in its current state, this frozen conflict where we're not going to work on a deal, we're not going to pursue peace—that's not realistic either. From Donald Trump's perspective, I think he's bored with this conflict, but there's really no way to walk away. And if you continue to operate within this conflict, it leads to escalation. That escalation is coming, whether through passive means or active and direct action, which Iran seems to be pushing toward. Because you can't maintain a naval blockade, sanctions, and frozen assets, and conduct strikes at will against a nation, and expect that to just be the status quo or the norm.

For how long? I don't know. At least from Donald Trump's perspective, into the new year. You know, if you go back to February, right after the new year in 2026, Donald Trump told us all that this would be quick: a few days, wipe them out. They're already destroyed. They're already begging for a deal. And here we are, going to pass the one-year mark pretty soon, which Donald Trump has said, yeah, it's going to go that long. And then you look at the war in Ukraine, with, you know, Russia's going to collapse. Russia can't hold up against the pressure of NATO support for Ukraine and U.S. support for Ukraine. And here we are this February, going into the fifth year.

So when you look at these prolonged forever wars, as people would call them, throughout the 21st century, that has seemed to be the United States' signature in fighting wars: Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria. Now with this conflict, it's going to be quick. We have a clear objective. We're going to do it, and we're done. We continually do not do that. It turns into, well, there was this objective, but now it's this objective, and then now it's this objective. In the military, that's called mission creep. In foreign policy, you call that a lack of a foreign policy. So we're seeing that happen in real time in Iran, and it seems to have become the signature of how the United States attempts to fight wars in the 21st century, by thinking we don't have to go all in. We don't have to commit everything.

Hey, American people, this is just going to be limited. We're just going to take care of this real quick. It's not going to cost us a lot. We're not going to be bogged down. When we went into Iraq, it was, "This isn't going to be another Vietnam War." When we went into Afghanistan, "This is not going to be another Vietnam." Now we're going into Iran, and we're saying, "This isn't going to be another Iraq." So it's just a continuation of the pattern. And unfortunately, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia will continue for quite some time still, though it's closer to the end. But the war with Iran is going to continue to drag on for quite some time. This conflict that we see between the United States and Iran will outlast this president. The next president of the United States will inherit this ongoing conflict.

#Danny

That definitely seems to be where things are heading. Anthony, let me ask you this, then, because we know that Israel has no interest in a status quo, no-peace, no-war situation, especially as a new

government has been formed in Israel and Netanyahu is still at the helm. So all this talk now in the so-called Hebrew press in Israel is, well, Israel may launch the attack first, may go first, may strike without direct support. They've submitted these plans, as you mentioned earlier, and have talked with CENTCOM and the Trump administration about them.

But what exactly would Israel require to do such a thing? Because while the 12-day war was, of course, begun by Israel, the United States was found to have provided a lot of support from the very get-go. And now, with the 40-day war beginning February 28th, I remember the initial reports were that Israel began the strikes. But then you found out right away that the U.S. Air Force was right alongside them, doing it as well. So, what are your thoughts on this preemptive strike rhetoric from Israel? What does it actually mean materially and militarily?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, Israel may intend to initiate renewed strikes unilaterally, but they're doing so with the understanding—maybe not direct promises, but an understanding based on historical actions and behavior—that the United States is going to come to their rescue or support. In the 12-day war, when Israel initiated attacks directly on Iran, they couldn't finish it. They left the door open for Iran to seize the initiative, and the United States came in with Operation Midnight Hammer. The United States did not want to conduct that operation, but we did.

When you look at the way this conflict started, from what we know, from what's been explained to us in a very convoluted way by Marco Rubio, by the president, and by Pete Hegseth—perhaps most directly by Marco Rubio, when he pretty much laid it out on the 1st of March—he said that we, the United States, knew that Israel was going to preemptively attack Iran. We knew that Iran was going to respond, and we knew Israel was going to respond to that, but that Israel would quickly lose the ability to fight this war. So instead of going into another situation like Midnight Hammer, where we then had to respond after the fact, we decided that we were just going to go in with Israel from the very beginning. We laid out this pathway of fait accompli or inevitability, where we said, “Okay, well, we might as well get involved in the beginning.”

Well, the other option is that we don't support Israel, but that's clearly not a palatable option for this administration. It's going to continue to support Israel. I was just reading key remarks from Netanyahu and Eisenkot today, November 23rd. Netanyahu now sees a direct and immediate threat that necessitates action. And, you know, Eisenkot is saying, “I don't think so. Like, cool your jets, caretaker prime minister.” But Netanyahu's still in charge, and he's obviously charging down that path. I don't see a reality where Netanyahu just says, “Okay, I guess I was wrong,” or, “Fine, you don't want to heed my warning, then I guess you'll just find out later.”

#Anthony Aguilar

I don't see Netanyahu taking that role or taking that position. He's going to push this. And whether the United States is with Israel at the beginning or not, the United States is going to get involved because Israel, like always, is going to bite off more than they can chew. They're going to get themselves into something that they can't finish. And the response to that is going to be devastating to Israel if the United States doesn't come to their rescue. So regardless of what the U.S. is saying now—"We won't" or "Don't do it"—if Israel does, we're going right along with them.

#Danny

Right. And I wonder if this has anything to do with all this talk about it being a four- to seven-day escalation. I'm wondering if the plan then would be, well, Israel, you can have your four to seven days, but eventually you're going to want to stop because of the consequences of what's going to happen to you when you get struck back. And maybe you could talk about this as well: it seems right now the United States is trying to turn this war into not just a naval war, but one utilizing munitions and weaponry they're more okay with losing. For example, the drones that are flying into Iranian airspace daily and, in a lot of cases, getting taken out electronically or by firepower. Your thoughts on that? It seems like the U.S. is trying to mitigate its own risk while maybe trying to figure out a way to satisfy the Israelis.

#Anthony Aguilar

This is a wildfire that the United States is trying to maintain or control on the fringes instead of directly addressing the fuel of the fire, the oxygen of the fire. We're trying to just caretake it around the edges. We see this with limited strikes. We see this with this blockade that is really not an effective, close-in blockade, but this distant, goalkeeper-like blockade. We're in it, but we're not really in it. Because, yes, ships are getting through this blockade, and the United States knows that. But it's not enough to make it look like the blockade is failing, though it's enough to make it seem that way.

Okay, you know, there's a release valve for the pressure that we don't have to publicize, but we're not willing to close off that valve, build that pressure, and actually fight this war. Same thing with our drones. You know, again today, Iran has claimed that another MQ-9 Reaper drone was taken down—shot down, electronically taken down, whatever the case was. So the United States is losing these MQ-9 Reaper drones, like, daily, sometimes multiple times a day. And over the last week, too, on the 17th, the 20th, and the 21st, an F-35, an F-16, and another F-35 were attempting to strike or conduct reconnaissance over the Iranian coast. All three of them, on the same flight path, had squawked 7700, the emergency code, for emergency landings or emergency procedures, all in the same area.

So CENTCOM will have you believe, "Oh, that was just a maintenance issue. It's nothing to worry about." And we see this pattern continuing, where there's obviously a lack of air superiority or air

supremacy by the United States and Israel. And then, if Israel is going to go into this for four to five days, three to four days, four to seven days—whatever they're anticipating—they cannot stay the course long enough to finish that or to actually bring consequences upon Iran that are going to prevent Iran from responding and retaliating or coming back even stronger. And we've seen this over and over and over again, whether it's the United States going in on it with Israel in the beginning because we already know the outcome, or us sitting back and saying, "Hey, we're not going to help you this time."

And we end up helping anyway because the consequences are more than what the United States is willing to accept in our relationship with Israel. You know, it's becoming more and more evident that that relationship is toxic. That relationship is manipulative. That relationship is very much, you know, Israel having this control or this extreme influence over our administration. But if Israel intends to, quote-unquote, go it alone, they're not going to be alone in it after they initiate it. The United States is surely going to come to their aid and help, if not directly with strikes, at least by providing more defensive munitions to support the Iron Dome, to support David's Sling, to support the Arrow 3—all those things that they're going to need to protect themselves against the onslaught of Iran's retaliation. And those defenses won't be enough.

So eventually the United States is going to have to get more involved because Iran is going to strike back against Israel, if what we anticipate happening does happen, beyond what Israel can handle and beyond what the United States can immediately provide. So then the United States is going to have to take this position: "Well, we can't keep intercepting and defending Israel against these missiles and drones. We're going to have to attack the sites where they're being launched, manufactured, or stored," which then draws the United States into direct confrontation yet again. So you kind of see how that storyline develops and how that escalation happens. In my opinion, that's how that's going to play out.

#Danny

When Trump says this, and there are reports about delaying strikes until 2027, the new year, doesn't that mean that conducting these kinds of strikes and engaging in a bigger operation with Iran will get more difficult? Because in the new year, that's when we have the new Congress. And of course, a lot of Democrats campaigned on how badly this war has gone for people in the United States. And economically, there's that economic pain. You even had Trump recently say something about the stock market, which was kind of shocking—that, you know, people should begin selling because it's only going to get worse. I'm taking that a little bit out of context, but even just saying those words is enough to spread fear about the economic woes, a lot of which are war-related. So, your thoughts on that? What does it actually mean for the Trump administration to claim that it's kicking the war can down the road, so to speak—delaying at least a major operation until 2027?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, time is not on the U.S. side in this. Delaying or dragging this out does not benefit the United States, either in our domestic political environment or in the reality of this conflict in terms of missiles, weapons, and manpower. We've devastated our naval manpower rotations with this conflict. That will have implications for INDOPACOM and SOUTHCOM for years to come, based on these aircraft carrier rotations and the extension of deployments. We've destroyed the Navy's manpower rotation. We have greatly crippled our strategic, global supply of interceptors and precision-strike missiles. Going into the new year, especially after January 3rd, when the new Congress, the 120th Congress, is sworn in, it's going to become even more difficult, as you mentioned, for Donald Trump to try to fight this war with any kind of approval or budget.

What we see right now is that Congress never approved this. Congress never approved funding it. The War Powers Resolution is an after-the-fact response: "Oh, you were bad. You did this, and we didn't approve it." That's symbolic. It doesn't have any teeth to it. The teeth of what Congress can do is the purse. Congress has the power of the purse. So what we've seen throughout these modern conflicts, whether it was Iraq, Afghanistan, or Syria, is that there hasn't been a declaration of war where Congress has said outright, "Yes, there's a war, and we are funding it through appropriations." What we've seen is that Congress is kind of on the fence: "Well, you know, at least support it. But yeah, we support it."

Well, are you going to fund it? No, no. Well, we are, because this reconciliation debt comes due. So right now we're at, what, $54 billion in costs in this conflict with Iran. That's not part of the NDAA or part of the appropriated budget. There's no budget line for it. It's like if I have my family budget and I know, okay, I've got to pay my mortgage. I've got to pay my car insurance. I've got to pay for this. Every month, there's what I have to spend my money on because it's been appropriated. I get my paycheck and I say, okay, I've got to pay for this. I've got to pay for that. I've got to pay for this. That's the family budget that's been approved by, you know, the family.

Well, imagine you're spending on the credit card every month, and that's not part of your budget. You can't afford it. Come the end of the year, that credit card starts building up interest, or you reach the limit on that credit card and can no longer use it. In order to use that credit card again, you have to pay it. But you can't because you don't have anything appropriated in the budget. So then you have to determine how you're going to pay it. Well, Congress continues to give in to that and take money out of the U.S. Treasury, out of the U.S. economy, to say, "Okay, well, we'll fund it." Because what happens is, whether it's Democrat or Republican, both parties do this. It comes due, and it's, "Hey, Congress, Department of Defense here. You gave me a million dollars for my defense budget."

"You appropriated that to me. I spent half a million on this that you didn't appropriate, that you didn't approve. So I need you to reconcile that. I need you to give me 1.5 million so I can pay off this debt and still have my million-dollar budget." And whether it's the Republicans at the time or the Democrats at the time, they start with, "No, no, no. You're going to have to reconcile that out of the budget we gave you because we didn't approve this." And then the Department of Defense always

comes back. And again, it doesn't matter which party is in power. The DOD then comes back with, "Well, I guess we're just not going to pay our soldiers. I guess we're just going to cut benefits for families. I guess we're not going to do those projects to improve the barracks or the housing."

And then it turns into, "Oh, you're a bad Congress because you abandoned the troops." And then they give in. We're going to see that happen again with the reconciliation of this debt. So going into the next Congress in the new year, that credit card that Pete Hegseth is spending on, that's now at $54 billion, is going to reach a limit where you can't spend anymore without an appropriation, because right now we're on this continuing resolution. But when the budget is finally passed—or, if not, then surely when we get into the next fiscal year on October 1st, for fiscal year 2028—you know, that credit card hits its limit, and you've got to start paying it. How do you pay it? It's not appropriated.

And if Congress doesn't, well, then that's going to take a chunk out of the defense budget to where this war can't be fought anymore, at least from a spending perspective. So it definitely gets more complicated in the new year. But it doesn't mean that the pathway out is any less obvious or that it expands the options for how to get out. There's still only one way out of this. And though there may be obstacles put in the way, that's still your only exit. So Donald Trump doesn't really have many choices in this. It's going to get harder for the United States to fight this war, to the point where, what do we do? Do we surrender? Do we just throw in the towel? Do we just say it's done, and we walk away and leave Iran with the control and the power of everything they've gained?

So yeah, the decisions and the options are going to become more and more limited, harder to address, harder to deal with, and harder to explain to the American people. And that's what happens when you initiate a war that doesn't have a clear solution. You initiate a war, and you immediately put yourself into a dilemma. And in a dilemma, there's no problem-solving. There's no solution. In a dilemma, it's a bad choice or a worse choice. And so that's what we're facing right now, and going into 2027, those choices are going to get worse. But it's still the difference between the worst of the choices and the least bad of the choices. And as those options get worse and worse and worse, those choices look worse and worse for the American people.

#Danny

Anthony, you've been around for successive U.S. presidents. There is something about legacy that does matter to them. And you've also been in the military in various capacities during these times when presidents are trying to shape their legacies. What do you think about this debate over Iran war funding with the new Congress? I mean, it's not set in stone that it's going to be knocked out. Actually, it'll probably be renewed before the new Congress comes in, by the Democrats, because they say they don't want a shutdown.

But even after that, right, it comes into this cycle of, well, there are other things that have to be considered. So, in terms of legacy, though, how do you see the Trump administration maneuvering

with multiple active wars going on in order to solidify that? It seems like he has not been able to engender any kind of confidence in the Washington establishment in terms of being able to do this for himself, let alone for the overall legitimacy of foreign policy and the Washington establishment as a whole. What are your thoughts on this?

#Anthony Aguilar

Well, Donald Trump started this war on the premise of "Trust me, bro." Okay, trust you based on what? Jared Kushner said it was a good idea? Jared Kushner suggested it? "Hey, we need more money." "For what?" "Well, for things that Israel told us." "Do we have any confirmation of that?" "No, but Israel said it." "Okay, what did they tell you?" "Well, I can't tell you because it was a secret meeting in the Oval Office where the chief of Mossad came and visited me directly. I can't share it, but trust me." Well, America and Congress are getting tired of the "trust me, bro" approach to war by Pete Hegseth and Donald Trump. It's time to show the proof.

Show us what we've been paying for. Show us what we've been putting into this. Because if you look at it right now, the situation is far worse than it was even before February 28th, 2026. So what is there to show for all this sacrifice and commitment and money? And that excuse, or that permissiveness, is running out for Donald Trump. But it doesn't necessarily mean, as you said—and that's a great point—that that's going to lead Congress to then cut it off. Because, you know, with Congress, it continues to lead to these dilemmas where, "If you don't agree to it, we're just going to shut down the government."

And to shut down the government right now, in the view of the American people, while we're fighting a war, as we go into the holidays with the economy the way that it is—I wouldn't say it would be a tipping point, but it would definitely move the American population closer to that tipping point. Americans are tired of it. We're tired of paying for these wars. We're tired of paying for these conflicts. We're tired of being lied to. We're tired of being talked to like we're uninformed or gullible idiots. And Americans are getting more and more tired of it. So those options going into the new year will be more limited, not because of the grace or the acumen of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, but because of the demands of the people.

I think that the Democrats are just as complicit in these wars as the Republicans are. I mean, look at the war spending, the lies, and the promises not kept under Obama and Biden. So I don't really see a drastic change in terms of Congress taking a firm stance, but I do see a shift in American sentiment toward demanding that Congress do something. And will that limit Donald Trump's ability to fight this war? Maybe, but it's not a guarantee because, again, he's fighting this war with non-appropriated money. He's using the credit card. And thus far, Congress has not cut the president off from using the credit card. So there can be a lot of talk, but if that doesn't translate into action in terms of actually cutting off that spending, well, then it's really just a lot of talk.

#Danny

Well, Anthony, before we head out, any final words on the situation we're in now as we head into this period where we're being told to wait until January to see if the Iran strikes and all these other escalations are going to happen? We're heading into the holidays. Your thoughts on where things are headed?

#Anthony Aguilar

One thing I'll say for sure heading into the holidays: the Department of Transportation, the TSA, and other entities have already said, hey, expect massive delays, expect closures, expect cancellations during the Thanksgiving holiday. In the event that there is some kind of massive outage, cancellation of plans, or downing of aircraft across the country right around Thanksgiving, it has nothing to do with these conflicts or these data breaches or these cyberattacks. It has nothing to do with that. It's El Niño. That's what they've said.

They said that the delays expected during the holiday season, especially for Thanksgiving, have nothing to do with what we've seen happening over the last week with our cyber capability or our cyber defense or our cybersecurity. It's El Niño. So we've gone from "Let's talk to the American people like they don't know what this is" to "Let's talk to all of us like we're a bunch of idiots." Yeah, going into the holiday season, things are going to be more expensive. It's going to be a lot harder for Americans not only to provide the extras, so to speak—gifts or something nice for the holidays—but also just to make ends meet. And it's because of these conflicts.

Look how much we're spending on this war. So, you know, every day that credit card is swiped for this war, though we can't pay off the balance, we have to pay the interest. And the interest on that is impacting American society deeply because of the immediate costs and their impact. And I don't see this getting better anytime soon, unfortunately. Yeah. You know, look at where we were February 27th and where we are now. The situation has gotten worse and worse and worse and worse and worse by the day, the week, and the month. I don't see it improving anytime soon. And Americans need to be cognizant of that and prepared.

#Danny

Well, Anthony, it was great. We'll head out of here together. Everyone, hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show. Tomorrow I'll be back on at 3 p.m. Eastern time with Daniel Davis. I'll see you all then. Hit the like button again. All the places to support this show are in the video description. Subscribe as well if you've been taken off the rolls. That happens sometimes. All right, everybody. See you all tomorrow. Bye-bye. Thank you, Danny.