

# Larry Johnson & Col. Wilkerson: Iran FIRES MISSILES at US Destroyers

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## #Nima

Hi, everybody. Today is Friday, June 5th, 2026, and our dear friends Larry Johnson and Col. Wilkerson are back with us. Welcome back. Hi there.

## #Larry

Nice shirt.

## #Nima

Larry, he's just smashing everything in here.

## #Larry

Yeah. All the rules. I'm a disruptive influence. Yeah.

## #Nima

Yeah, I want to start, Larry, with you, because for the third time it seems that it was reported that two American destroyers tried to enter the Persian Gulf without Iran's permission. And then the Iranian Navy said they announced that they targeted the vessels with suicide drones and anti-ship missiles, forcing them to return to the Sea of Oman. And then we had CENTCOM coming and denying what happened. Then the Iranians came and published this video. They said that they used these missiles, but they don't show the location, and we don't know what happened. But is this sort of behavior gonna continue in the Persian Gulf?

## #Larry

Well, so that video is from about two days ago, right? Yeah. So, no, I think we're seeing, you know, there has been a strange turn of events since a week ago today, or a week ago yesterday. And I'm

not claiming, you know, putting Pepe Escobar and I as the ones that caused this at all, but both Pepe and I received information last Thursday, and we were told about the source. And the source is a senior Pakistani official in a position to have knowledge about this information. And when they laid out the claim that President Pezeshkian called Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan following a meeting of the National Security Council in Iran, it was basically, you tell the United States that we're not going to have any more, no more talks about anything, you know, we're cutting off talks on nuclear issues.

We're not going to even entertain or consider a framework for controlling the nukes. And we're going to do a demonstration to show you that we got one, basically. That was the message. And I did confirm subsequently that that conversation that Pezeshkian had with Sharif took place over a non-secure line. Now, was that just a mistake, or I think that was a deliberate decision by both Iran and Pakistan, because they know that the United States would be listening in, and they'd get it. And then, in turn, Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan ordered his foreign minister to talk and inform Marco Rubio.

And so what have we seen since that conversation, you know, I'd say allegedly took place, except Robert Barnes, who was a former Trump lawyer, and he's got White House sources, he confirmed that, in fact, that message that Pezeshkian said that he gave to Sharif in Pakistan was, in fact, delivered to Marco Rubio. So the U.S. got that message. Now, didn't that raise the question, well, are they serious? And we saw, you know, last Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and then to Wednesday, that there were U.S. provocations continuing in the Persian Gulf. I think the biggest one was last Tuesday, when the attack took place — the United States hit a helicopter carrying a Hellfire, hit a running tanker, and then they hit a communication site on Qeshm Island.

And then Iran turned around and immediately fired an anti-ship missile and reportedly hit a ship connected to the U.S., and then launched attacks in Kuwait that were significant. You know, it's amazing what they do with AI, because they put out a video claiming there was an Iranian drone that hit the air terminal at the international airport. Except it shows it's broad daylight when this drone's flying in and hitting it. This all took place in the dark, for God's sake. Okay? I mean, if you're going to do the AI stuff, at least be smart about it. You know, don't be a bunch of dumbasses. And then satellite imagery has emerged showing this shelter. Yeah, this is the one.

## **#Lawrence**

The attack took place in the dark.

## **#Larry**

But, you know, so they create this AI image to claim, oh no, this was Iran. The drone shelter at the airbase that the United States is using was obliterated. And the good old-fashioned, you know, term, it was just a hole in the ground after they got done. And then since then, crickets. Nothing. Okay, so

why is the United States now standing down? So I believe—well, let me, it's not what I believe. Based upon what the source said, the Pakistanis believe that Iran is serious about this, and they conveyed that to the United States, and apparently Donald Trump and some of the people around him believe it. And the Pakistanis believe that they're going to succeed in getting a meeting in Islamabad between Trump and Pezeshkian, which if they pull that off, I mean, it will be remarkable. Now, this isn't Pakistan doing this on its own.

It's doing it at the behest and support of China and, to a lesser extent, Russia. So, you know, this is a broad effort to try—well, why would China care? China wants to get the Strait of Hormuz back open and get everything, commerce, back online because it is also hurting the Chinese economy. Not as bad as it's hurting the rest of the world, but I think China understands if the rest of the world goes into depression, then all of a sudden they're not buying goods from China. So, you know, China's got a clear interest in helping get this settled. So, you know, we're in an unusual time, but what we're seeing is a clear shift in how Donald Trump is talking about Iran, and now even carrying out military operations, even minor provocations. They've cut back on that so far in the last 24 hours. So, hey... I've laid it out. Folks, draw your own conclusion. I'm not going to tell you what to believe.

## **#Nima**

Carl, you made your point before coming to this live. I think everybody would be happy to hear what you think about it.

## **#Lawrence**

Well, my point was based on, as I told you before we came on the show, I listened to Alastair, Alastair Crooke, very closely, and I went over some key areas in his interview again. And I have a lot of respect for Alastair, and I think his knowledge of the region spans decades and goes deeply into both Shia and Sunni. But I think he left out one very important factor, and this feeds into what Larry just said. And the factor is it's not necessarily the United States Iran is trying to deter, were it to do a test or were it to announce that it had a weapon. They wouldn't even have to test in my book. It's Israel. And Israel is, as the Omani deputy or foreign minister, I think it was, said, the real problem in the region.

And we're not looking. And Alastair finally did come around to this — that we're looking at not just the Iranians, but we're looking at their so-called proxies. And I don't buy that for a minute. I think Alastair was right about that. The Houthis are the Houthis. Yeah, if they can get a little support here, a little support there, they will. But they're the Houthis. They're not Iran's proxies as we depict them. We're forgetting about Palestine, a Palestinian state. Even the Saudis have said that. We're forgetting about what Israel is doing in four distinctly different wars — five or six if you want to count the others like Syria.

And we're forgetting about what Israel presents as a threat, which he went over very, very profoundly in terms of Lebanon, and talked about Hassan Nasrallah and others and what has been happening there, what is going on right now — the political dilemma that Netanyahu is in, both personally, meaning he's going to jail if he loses this election, and into ignominy, which isn't his idea of how he wants to finish up his life and his term — and the rock and the hard place that he's caught between with the people in Israel who are campaigning against him and are going to intensify that based on his lack of doing things that are assuring Israel's security, whereas they will. And so he's caught. He's got to keep up in Lebanon. He's got to do what he's doing in Lebanon. He's got to increase what he's doing in Lebanon.

He's got to answer the IDF's questions about what are we doing here and show them that, you know, go ahead, do what you need to do to defeat this enemy if you can. All of that is warp and woof of what I'm trying to say about Ted Postol, for example, and his prediction that the Iranians might build one themselves, let alone get one from someone else. If you look at all of that and you say, do they really have the provocation? Do they really have the strategic rationale to get a nuclear weapon and to demonstrate that they have a nuclear weapon? It's not the United States they're trying to deter. They've deterred us. They have deterred us quite readily. It's Israel.

And as long as Israel is there, I think, just as there was with Kim Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, and all the Kims with regard to South Korea, their real problem wasn't South Korea. Their real problem was the United States. I mean, they actually thought—and intelligence reveals they thought—they could defeat South Korea. I'm not sure that was true, but they thought they could. But the United States, they didn't think they could. You know, with U.S. power coming onto the peninsula, they didn't think they could. So that was what that was for. And the idea that China and Russia wouldn't go along with it—absolutely. China and Russia fought tooth and nail in the six-party talks and elsewhere trying to keep North Korea from getting a nuclear weapon. They didn't want them to have one.

China was very explicit about it. And we even got some good intelligence that said, well, one of the reasons is because if the Korean Peninsula is unified, they don't want that unified Korean Peninsula to be a nuclear power, a nuclear weapons power. But they went along with it, and they're going along with it now because they didn't have a choice. All to say that it's a little more complicated, I think, about Iran looking for a nuclear weapon. And were I just looking at it from a military professional point of view, I'd say get a weapon. Get deterrence against the principal enemy in your area, against the problem in the area, against the reason there will be no Palestinian state, against the reason there will be turmoil from now until kingdom come. Israel.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, and let me just, you know, let me suggest I can conceive how Mojtaba Khamenei would square the circle on going against what would appear to be a rejection of his father's fatwa. So, you know, as we've discussed in previous conversations, the heart of this from the Shia perspective is one of the problems with a nuclear weapon is it has the potential to kill noncombatants in a massive

way, and that killing noncombatants is haram, it's a sin. But if you say, look, we're now at an existential point, that our ability to protect and defend the people of Iran, for starters, is at risk.

And the only way to perhaps fully deter the threat presented by Israel is to have a weapon that could be used against Israeli military facilities. So in other words, you say, okay, we're going to do this, but it's only going to be used against military targets. It's not going to be used against civilian targets. That's one way I think that possibly how Mojtaba went about the decision-making, saying, okay, we're now going to do this. But it was in the aftermath of the murder of his father, mother, wife, and child. So, you know, it's not an unnatural reaction to say, okay, we now have to do something that was previously considered wrong, but we're going to try to do it in the right way because we have to protect ourselves.

## **#Lawrence**

Yeah, and I'd reinforce that, Nima, with just a simple statement that Kim Jong-un has not shot anybody with his nuclear weapons. Yeah. It's a deterrent, and he knows it's a deterrent. Now, I will admit Israel is a volatile character in this whole thing. You don't know what they're going to do. And it's not quite like South Korea and the United States with South Korea. But it is still a deterrent. I take the point that Alistair was making, too, about counterproliferation being an incentive to proliferation. I take that well because we talked about that a lot in the State Department. And to a certain extent, he's right. It is an incentive. And what Kim did is an incentive to other states if they have the wherewithal politically and money to. We found the biggest objection by a number of states that were on our list for possible nuclear weapons candidates was money.

It's so damned expensive. And so that was a deterrent for several of them. They didn't want to spend all that hard-earned cash. They weren't the richest countries in the world anyway, on a nuclear program, because it was so damned expensive. But you get away from that if you start doing things like we're doing in the world now, which is to say, okay, it's all over, everybody's living in a Hobbesian world. Oh, by the way, the empire will eat you anytime it can. Then you put a new incentive on it. And the Non-Proliferation Treaty actually becomes, I think, defunct. Many would argue right now. In fact, I'm reading articles all the time now on the edges of the nuclear discussion about how the NPT is dead, absolutely dead. It doesn't mean anything to anyone anymore.

## **#Nima**

NPT is part of, Larry, this whole process of, you know, sending experts to Iran to see the nuclear facilities and to verify everything. This was a huge process, no security problem for Iran for such a long time. They will recognize the scientists.

## **#Lawrence**

We made it that way. I mean, we put agents on the team. We got the director to be our person. When he wasn't our person, we agitated to get him removed and put another one in there. I mean, it's clear the IAEA was acting on behalf of the empire most of the time. I'm not saying all the time. I'm not saying all the people were corrupt, but I am saying key ones were, and we made sure they were so that the decision would always be positive for us.

## **#Nima**

Larry, the problem for Donald Trump is not right now what's going on in the Persian Gulf, in my opinion, it's what's going on between Israel and Lebanon. That's why, you know, everything is happening in that region. That's why Iran reacted to what Israel wanted to do in Dahia, in the southern part of Beirut. This is so important. This is the first time you see Iran coming out and saying to Israel, if you attack Lebanon, we're going to do the same to the northern part of Israel. This is huge, in my opinion, from the Iranian point of view. And how is that going to change? How is that going to come into the calculation, into the equation of Washington?

## **#Larry**

Well, clearly it has inspired Donald Trump to pick up the phone and have a conversation, I guess we'll call it, with Bibi Netanyahu. And, you know, a lot of people dismissed the Axios report, understandably, because the author of it has a track record of being a shill and mouthpiece for propaganda. But if it was propaganda, Trump didn't leave him hanging. He kept saying, yeah, I had a tough conversation with Bibi, you know, so he basically admitted it. And you're correct, Nima, that, you know, since Iran was created, you know, it formed itself as an Islamic Republic 47 years ago. And during the last, you know, we've had, you know, it came into being after the whole civil war in Lebanon started.

The civil war in Lebanon started in 1975. So at no time in that 47-year history until now did Iran directly speak up and say, okay, if you don't stop attacking, we're going to attack you. And so that's a game changer, I think, because it highlights the fact that Iran feels quite comfortable and confident in its ability to deliver on its threat. And while Israel may have been reluctant to believe it, they still finally listened to Trump. Whether they did it willingly or not, I don't know. But all we know is that the threats that were being made, particularly by these madmen, these monsters, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, about leveling, flattening Dahia, an entire suburb of Beirut.

They've been quiet. And again, this piece of information that Pepe and I dropped—was it intended for manipulation? No, I think there's a lot going on behind the scenes now that is out of the ordinary. And as a result, we're starting to see, you know, there was at least a cessation of the bombing attacks on Beirut. I mean, that's stopped so far, you know, knock on wood. But this

agreement that Washington put out the other day, I mean, this is just another example of a stupid gesture. You know, that's happened before over the last, you know, 50-odd years that this war has been—51 years that this civil war in Lebanon has been underway.

## **#Lawrence**

If you want an end to it.

## **#Larry**

You've got to sit Hezbollah at the table too. They've got to be part of that negotiation. And if they're not part of that negotiation, you don't have a deal. And so the Trump administration can delude themselves and, oh yeah, we've got the Lebanese army that's going to force Hezbollah out. Good luck with that. Forty percent of their army is Shia, okay? They've got brothers and cousins and fathers and uncles that are Hezbollah fighters. Ain't going to happen. So this is, let's call it, it's sort of a step in the right direction, but until Hezbollah is fully engaged in the process, you know, Hezbollah is going to continue beating the hell out of the Israelis.

## **#Lawrence**

There's another thing that Alistair talked about that I agree with 100%—that Hassan Nasrallah was very respected in Iran. And if you wanted to talk about influence, his influence on Iran was probably more powerful than their influence on him. And what did Israel do with him? Probably the most astute politician in Beirut—killed him.

## **#Larry**

Well, yeah, and on that point, some have commented, well, you know, did Trump talk to Hezbollah? You know, Hezbollah is not going to talk to Donald Trump, at least directly. There will only be indirect communication because they learned their lesson. What the United States and Israel did in the death of Nasrallah was, the United States was talking to Nasrallah about getting him involved, helping with the ceasefire, and that meeting that took place where he was killed was entirely in response to a U.S. request. The United States used the communications with him to geolocate him so he could be killed. That's what happened. And Hezbollah has figured that out. So they go, you know, we're not stupid. You know, you got us once, but we're not going to do that again. So this is, you know, I think we're in a new phase where the United States is discovering the limits of its power.

## **#Nima**

Colonel, what is the reality here between Israel and Lebanon? In terms of casualties, in terms of the weapons or air defense systems that are getting hit by drones, it's something, as you've seen, you've watched Alistair Crook mention, it's something like 8 to 10 casualties every day. I think he's right, and I think basically Netanyahu is doing everything he can to hide that from the Israeli people.

## **#Lawrence**

The casualties, both WIA and KIA, are quite high. In fact, I think they're probably as high as any in this conflagration of wars that Israel is involved in right now. And it doesn't look like there's going to be any surcease there, because if they keep moving north, if they go to the next river, for example, if they go back to attacking Beirut again, which I think is inevitable, then they're just going to grow. So that's pressure on Netanyahu too from the forces on the ground, because they want to do certain things to limit that, to cut them a little bit, and he's not going to let them do it in the way they want to do it because he's trying to walk both dogs at the same time — convince Trump that he's not doing what he's doing, and at the same time doing what he's doing. This is a really difficult place for him to be. And I think what's happening politically, of course, as you know, in Israel, is his opponents are saying he's not doing enough and even saying that he is kowtowing to the American president.

## **#Larry**

Yeah.

## **#Lawrence**

And they wouldn't if they were elected. You know, that's the insinuation anyway. He's really between a rock and a hard place right now — damned if he does and damned if he doesn't. And he'll pick the one that damns him the least, both personally and politically, I think. And that's going to be going after Hezbollah full bore.

## **#Nima**

Larry, did you see the terms of the agreement between the Lebanese government and Israel? It was unbelievable what was mentioned in that. Hezbollah is not going to attack Israel south of the Litani River. Hezbollah is the enemy of the state of Lebanon.

## **#Larry**

I didn't read the whole thing, but when I heard sort of the briefing on those parts, I just laughed, because it's just ridiculous that they think they can ignore Hezbollah. And as I pointed out earlier, 40% of the Lebanese army that's supposedly going to enforce this is Shia, and they've got too many

family ties into Hezbollah. And do you think it's just a coincidence? Am I suggesting that Hezbollah may have deliberately infiltrated the Lebanese army? You bet your ass. Okay? These people are not fools. They're survivors, and they understand that they're up against a terrible enemy. So what... and that's why I went back and said that until they get Hezbollah at the table, they're not going to have an agreement.

I particularly laughed at the force Hezbollah to abandon territory south of the Litani River and go north. Yeah, that'll happen. So actually, it goes back to Col. Wilkerson's point. Israel is overstretched. Put it in the context of taking the population of New York City and putting that population in New Jersey, for Americans anyway. You know, you live in Brazil, you don't know what I'm talking about. But that's basically the size of Israel. Now, imagine how the city of New York would react to news that in the last six months, we've had 200 of our police officers killed. Good Lord. I mean, that would be considered an unbelievable number.

I mean, it would be shocking. And yet, that's what Israel's experiencing. And we're not even talking about the number of wounded — that's far, far larger. And then add to that that they're getting post-traumatic stress syndrome treatment, the growing number of suicides among Israeli reservists. So, no, look, this is an ugly, ugly situation for Israel. And they've painted themselves into a corner, and there's not an easy escape route or one readily identifiable. And yet the extremists that surround Netanyahu — the Ben-Gvirs, the Smotriches — they're going to double down. They are not actually stepping back and rationally evaluating the situation.

## **#Lawrence**

Now, Alistair's point about it being the kind of army that it is — basically the people mobilized, reservists — and the strategy that's now being pursued being absolutely counterproductive, because you've got a, call it a citizen army if you will, basically. And you've got this strategy that is calling on them to act like a huge professional army going out and fighting to the death four or five countries at the same time.

## **#Larry**

Yeah.

## **#Lawrence**

This is insane.

## **#Nima**

The point with the case of the agreement between Lebanon and Israel is that, as you say, Hezbollah is not going to attack Israel south of the Litani River, you're legitimizing the occupation of the land of

Lebanon if you're not going to fight back. And in this agreement, there was no mention of whether Israel is going to withdraw totally from Lebanon. Nothing of that sort was mentioned in this agreement. That's why Hezbollah then, later on, rejected the whole thing.

And here is what the prime minister of Lebanon today said: that Iran should have mercy on southern Lebanon and stop treating it and its residents as a bargaining chip to improve its terms in negotiations. I don't know what this guy is talking about. I don't know what that bargaining chip is that Iran is using in these negotiations. And how is that going to influence or improve Iran's position? Because they're talking about Lebanon, the occupation in Lebanon, and this guy is talking about Iranian negotiations Iran is using. What is happening with this government?

## **#Lawrence**

Well, they're intentionally— Is that for me? I think they're intentionally talking past one another. I think the bottom line for Iran and Lebanon is that Israel has to stop. And if Israel doesn't stop, and if it goes even further, Iran will add its weight to Hezbollah and begin to attack Israel in places where they're being attacked only by Hezbollah now. And that's going to deepen the conflict there. And Iran has what I would call leverage now, really real leverage, and it's going to use it. And it's going to use it. I think ultimately they're in a position now where I would expect them to begin to exploit the leverage they've gained in this conflict, notwithstanding whether or not they might have a nuclear weapon. They're going to use the leverage to influence every one of these conflicts.

They're going to use it to influence ultimately the one, and that's Palestine — no state and the continued killing — which Netanyahu, I was looking at the figures yesterday, Netanyahu is still killing people. I mean, he's killing people at a fairly alarming rate — should be alarming anyway — to the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, to Tony Blair, and all those nuts who were supposed to be doing something there. He's still killing them. And he's moving lines around so that he can kill them more expeditiously. He's killing them above ground. He's not going down into the tunnels and trying to get Hamas the way Lapid and Naftali Bennett and others want to do. But he's still got that conflict going, and that's still part, I think, of Iran's ultimate wishes.

And they'll use their leverage there, too. We can't isolate these conflicts that Israel is involved in because each one of them has a critical point for Iran too, not least of which is, as they're demonstrating in Lebanon. But I think they're going to be the same way about Palestine and a Palestinian state, much the way MBS has said, however rhetorically. But I don't think it's rhetorical anymore. I think it's profound now. And I think they're going to insist on whatever comes out of this, ultimately, if we do have some kind of settlement, that there be a viable road to a Palestinian state, and it not be in 10 years or 15 years, it be post-Hamas. That's the kind of leverage I think Iran is building in this conflict. And it's leverage I don't think we realize.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, no, just to reinforce Colonel Wilkerson's point, in the recent effort to resolve the Abraham Accords, both the Saudis and Qataris, they all made it clear, hey, we're not doing any Abraham Accord until the Palestinians have a state, okay? Yeah. That's it. So you don't get to use the Abraham Accords as an excuse to disenfranchise the Palestinians. But, you know, when you come back to the whole issue of Lebanon and Hezbollah, you know, how ironic it is that, you know, when the civil war started in Lebanon in '75, Hezbollah didn't exist. That was the emergence of Amal, which was a tool, sort of, at least at the time, of Hafez al-Assad in Syria. And it's only in '82, when the Israelis invade Lebanon and make their way all the way to Beirut, that Hezbollah emerges and becomes an entity. Now, again, at that point, there was a natural alliance between Hezbollah and Iran from the standpoint that they were Shia.

But that wasn't part of some big deal, big, uh, bullshit plot by the Iranians to, you know, overthrow the Christians in Lebanon. But now here we are, good lord, you know, 47 years later, or 44 years later, and Hezbollah is the dominant force. I had to explain to somebody yesterday, I keep thinking, you know, they ignore the fact that, yes, back in '82, Hezbollah was a, let's call it, a militant organization specialized in fighting. But today they are—how do you describe it?—they're a governing entity. They provide social services. They provide health care. They're a step beyond, you know, if you've watched any of these gangster movies, you know, like the black guy that controlled Harlem, you know, on Thanksgiving and Christmas, he'd show up at the truck, pass out turkeys to everybody.

Yeah, this is a step beyond that. Hezbollah's doing more than just passing food out to people. They actually provide a full range of government services in addition to being a premier fighting organization. These are not incompetent people. They've actually got a high degree of military skill. And now finally, after 47 years, this is the first time, as you noted, Nima, that Iran stood up and said, wait a damn minute. You're going to stop. If you attack them, you're attacking us. So this has now put it into an entirely new dimension, and it takes it beyond, you know, just, oh, does Iran have a nuke? It's put it into a whole new arena of remaking the political and power structure of the Middle East.

## **#Lawrence**

I remember one working group where one of the individuals in the group kind of offered the opinion that, at that particular time, they were a political party with an armed wing. And he said, like the Republican Party having not only its power in Congress and its power politically, but it also had an army, which was, I think, a reality. Yeah. And it just was a powerful reality because they had better leadership than the others.

## **#Nima**

There is no way, Carl, to put Hezbollah and this new government in Lebanon together, because there's so much influence by the United States and, I don't know, Europeans. I don't know how we

can bring these two parts of Lebanese society together. That's a civil war within the society, which would benefit Israel.

## **#Lawrence**

Yeah. You see, well, we play on that all the time. We've been playing on it for years, and so has Israel. That's how we keep the other part of the government functioning on our behalf, even to the point where, in that very meeting that I was just referring to, we were talking at that time about IMET, International Military Education and Training. And we were talking about doing more with Lebanon, and we were doing it with the Lebanese military because we wanted to train them to be as good. Really, the purpose was to train them to be as good as that other armed party. And so we were creating the fertile ground for a civil war in Lebanon. We knew damn well we were doing that, but we thought we would win. And, of course, Israel was right in the middle of it.

## **#Nima**

Larry, here is what Robert Kagan said. I don't know if you watched his recent interview yesterday or the day before.

## **#Lawrence**

I refuse to torture myself that way. It'd be like watching Bolton get convicted.

## **#Larry**

Oh no, I liked that. I had the popcorn out for that.

## **#Lawrence**

It actually seems to have been a trial on the issues, too. Not like me or some of the other trumped-up charges.

## **#Larry**

Okay, so what did our buddy Kagan say?

## **#Nima**

Yeah, here's what he said.

## **#Speaker 04**

I think what you just said about where we stand now is that Iran will effectively control the Strait. The enriched uranium, I assume, will not be taken out. They will have control over what Israel can do in southern Lebanon. And there's not been a regime change except to a younger, more radical regime. That seems absolutely unacceptable. Is there any alternative? Is there anything that can be done?

## **#Speaker 05**

Unfortunately, just because something is unacceptable doesn't mean that we're not going to have to accept it. And again, I look—I suppose there is some kind of war that the United States could fight, which would be a multi-month war at the very least. It would require risking losing ships. You know, in the Strait, when you convoy in a contested area, you lose ships. In addition to which, I don't think that the Strait will be safe again as long as this regime is in power.

And so if you really wanted to, I suppose, solve the problem—although I'm not sure what kind of solution it is—you'd have to invade and occupy Iran and stay there for a long time so that you had a new regime. And I just think there's no way the American people are interested in doing that, and I'm not even sure I would recommend doing that at this point, because the costs are going to be enormous. So, you know, we have to accept the fact that this is a loss. I mean, we have lost in the past. We've lost previous wars—in Vietnam, obviously. Unfortunately, this one has, as we've been discussing, much greater strategic ramifications than the loss in Vietnam did, actually.

## **#Nima**

Yeah.

## **#Larry**

He's not, you know, I'll take back things I said about him being stupid. He's not completely stupid. He made some actually astute, correct observations. Now, he, you know, but he failed to consider one other alternative. The Strait will be safe. Just negotiate a deal with Iran where you leave them the hell alone. You know, stop trying to destroy the Islamic Republic. And we pretend that this is about a fanatical religious regime that's hanging homosexuals and burning virgins and all sorts of ridiculous nonsense. No, it's just that the United States is fundamentally pissed off at the Iranians who rose up and overthrew a CIA-installed regime. That's it.

## **#Lawrence**

Bingo. Bingo.

## **#Larry**

How dare they do that? We're the ones controlling the world, not them.

## **#Lawrence**

And there's a lot of that that affects how we look and are with regard to Russia, too.

## **#Larry**

Well, yeah. I mean, it's like, you know, if we pretend this is about religious extremism—really? Then why in the hell are we selling shit to Saudi Arabia, okay?

## **#Lawrence**

And why do we have Pete Hegseth having prayer meetings in the Pentagon?

## **#Larry**

Yeah, yeah. Where's the theocracy? Our hypocrisy reeks. And rarely do we actually come down and admit why we're trying to do something and what we're trying to accomplish. I mean, I sent a long note last night to John Kiriakou because when he started at the CIA, his account was Iraq and the psychological profile of Saddam. And, you know, I remember in the 90s, I bought into the, you know, "Saddam is a demon" kind of theology that the U.S. was preaching. But now, with the benefit of some experience and hindsight and now being able to understand the history, you know, we had a relationship with Saddam, at least starting in 1980, if not before.

And in 1980, it accelerated because of a finding that Jimmy Carter signed off on that authorized a CIA operation to work with the Iraqis, Saddam in particular, to take out Iran. This was an attack, this whole thing, you know, from Carter's standpoint, to get a war started with Iran so as to weaken them, so as to, you know, release the hostages. It continued under Ronald Reagan. And my old outfit, the CIA, was the principal involved with liaison, both gathering support among the Gulf Arabs to fund Saddam's operation, providing precursor chemicals for chemical weapons, providing biological agents for biological weapons, providing intelligence so Iraq would know where to attack, where the Iranian weaknesses were, where the forces were concentrated.

The only thing that ruined that relationship with the CIA was Iran-Contra, because once Saddam found out that he was being, you know, betrayed by the CIA, you know, selling weapons to Iran, he booted them and then insisted he'd only deal with U.S. military officials—hence Pat Lang and Lieutenant Colonel Rick Francona were the ones hand-carrying that intelligence. But do you believe that during that 1981 to 1988–89 period Saddam was not in contact or having regular conversations with U.S. diplomats in Baghdad? Oh, of course he was. And then all of a sudden, after he tells us that Kuwait's stealing oil and asks us, "You guys got a problem with it?"

We say no. Then all of a sudden, we turn him into this demonic, evil reincarnation of Adolf Hitler. I mean, the United States keeps doing this shit repeatedly, over and over and over and over. We did it to Manuel Noriega. We did it to Muammar Gaddafi. We did it to Saddam Hussein. We've been trying to do it to Iran. We're doing it to Russia. And, you know, at some point, the United States needs to look in the mirror and say, you know what? The problem's not out there. The problem's here. We're the problem. We need to fix ourselves before we go out claiming that we're here to fix the world.

## **#Lawrence**

Just to reinforce what Larry said, when Peter Kornbluh got that huge tranche of principal documents from the agency and other places—National Security Council documents and so forth—at the National Security Archives over at George Washington University, two of the things I pulled out in my look at it were the comments very early on that, I think we were looking at probably the days after the coup. And the CIA statement I withdrew from there was that this is a young man we can work with, or something to that effect. It's the CIA's analysis of Saddam Hussein.

And then the other one I pulled out was the CIA report from the Sierra Maestra, where they were with Fidel, and they were cautioning against taking any adverse action toward what he was doing, because what he was going to do was get rid of a very filthy regime, and that we could probably work with him in the future. And, of course, he actually did come to America and talk with people about not being adverse to U.S. interests, if you will, and so forth. I think it was during Nixon. And look what happened there. We turned him into an anathema, communist to the hilt. And he went that route because we didn't give him any other choice. So it's a recurring theme in American history, particularly post-World War II history.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, and just one more brief anecdote related to that. An OSS officer named Fuselier—I knew his son, Burley Fuselier, who was a Diplomatic Security agent and actually head of Diplomatic Security at one point. So Burley's father was in Vietnam, and he was working with a guy named Ho Chi Minh. And it was a young Ho Chi Minh. But Ho Chi Minh was talking about how his goal was liberating his country from French oppression. But later we made it into somehow this was communism trying to take over the world. We had to stop communism. We get 58,000, 59,000 Americans killed—and that's the ones that died in combat. We don't count the casualties of the ones who went on and died from drug overdose and suicide and homelessness because of the traumatic mental injuries inflicted as a consequence of that war. And we keep, as Col. Wilkerson said, we keep doing it over and over. We've got to stop.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Yeah. Larry, Colonel, I'm talking to you, and I'm somehow confused.

## **#Lawrence**

Well, I've got to change my name. I've got to change my name. You can call me Brown or something.

## **#Nima**

Karol, what do you make of this new Section 224, which somehow wants to merge the two militaries, the U.S. and Israeli militaries? And here's what Congressman Ro Khanna said about this section.

## **#Speaker 06**

People are tired of the arrogance and insolence of Prime Minister Netanyahu telling America what we should do. The entire country of Israel has a GDP that is less than a single town in my district. Yet somehow Netanyahu thinks he can tell the American people what we should do. The person who's most upset with him right now is President Donald Trump. And everyone in America, whether you're a Republican, an independent, or a Democrat, says that we need to tell Netanyahu that America calls the shots, not the prime minister of any other country. They want less cooperation and blank checks to Israel, not more.

Only the United States Congress would dream up, at this moment, "let's actually do more for Israel, not less." And that's what Section 224 does. It's a pretty simple thing: should we do more for Israel than we already do, or should we do less? If you think we should do more for Israel, you should be against my amendment. If you think we should do less for Israel at a time when he's arrogantly telling Donald Trump what to do, then you should be for my amendment. Now, let me just be clear: Mr. Netanyahu actually wrote to a member of Congress to put this Section 224 into the bill.

## **#Lawrence**

All true. All true. All true. And the really insidious thing is that Bibi set this up well in advance by downplaying the MOU, the normal Memorandum of Understanding, that for 10 years or so it would be in effect for, knew and was due for 2027, which is why he timed this. He pooh-poohed it. He said, we don't need that, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. This is all propaganda because he knew this was coming about. He knew he was going to have a hand in writing it. His person was going to write it in the U.S. Congress and that this agreement would be in effect. Now, Rumsfeld tried to do this to a certain extent when he was Secretary of Defense, but not with Israel.

What he tried to do, and this is a big point for me, what he tried to do was get the authority for spending in something like IMET, for example, International Military Education and Training, where State had the authority to pick the states who would get the money, and then Defense had the money appropriated to them, and they handed the money out. And there was some guidance and

some rationale to the way Defense did that on the ground, but basically State determined the states to whom we would give this money. Well, Congress saw through Rumsfeld. Powell didn't even have to make a run on the Hill. They said, no, go home. State's going to keep those authorities. Well, what this is, is giving similar authorities to DOD over things that have been throughout the bureaucracy, but principally at Political-Military Affairs at State and elsewhere in State for oversight.

And even though Blinken and Sullivan and Biden in particular, if he wasn't demented, they abuse this majorly by disregarding the oversight, disregarding the law even. Blinken should go to jail for what he said and did. And this is why Josh Paul left Political-Military Affairs at State. And Josh has a big action going right now in his alternative to AIPAC PAC, trying to fight this provision. There'll be no oversight other than DOD. Oh, and guess who else will be overseeing it? Lockheed Martin, RTX, Grumman, Boeing, and a host of other bandits. They'll be colluding together. And you think Lockheed Martin, for example, with its proprietary maintenance, is a problem for the military?

Well, Bibi, you're going to get a little piece of that too now, I guarantee you, because Lockheed knows how lucrative that is to do. So it might not even be that good for the security situation in either country. It damn sure won't be good for the relationship between Washington and Jerusalem, and vice versa. But Bibi will love it because he thinks—and I think there's some credibility for him thinking this way because our Congress is so lax in what they do in terms of oversight. They let anybody write their legislation for them these days, including Bibi. But he thinks he's going to get away with murder inside this apparatus. I don't think that's going to be the case. I think what's going to really take it over eventually are the contractors. And that's just writ large with problems. And the DOD is going to oversee it the way State was overseeing it or trying to oversee it?

I'm sorry, I don't see that happening. I really don't. There's no reason for DOD to have any real oversight over it because it's largesse for them. And largesse is what they get and what they live on now. \$1.5 trillion being the latest largesse. Largest defense budget since World War II. And look at what we're doing with it. We don't even know what we're doing with it, Nima. We don't even know what we're doing to it. They can't pass an audit. This is unconscionable, what we're doing with this national security budget. It really is about \$2.3 trillion if you look at the whole thing, across every category—Homeland Security, Veterans Affairs. We shifted out Veterans Affairs from DOD to an administration of itself. Why did we do that? You know what their budget is now? It's approaching \$350 billion now—for veterans. That's what happens when you do all these wars.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, you know, essentially the thrust of this action is to take it out of, uh, take it away from policy. In other words, right now military assistance to Israel, like to any other country, falls under what they call the Foreign Military Financing system. And that largely goes through the State Department. And why through State? Because the military aid is seen as an extension of U.S. power, that we've

got to make decisions—do we want to help this country or do we not want to help this country? It's supposedly got to be part of a broader—not just a military strategy—but also a political strategy that merges with foreign policy.

So now what they're doing is taking it out. It's going to shove it strictly into where it's a direct Pentagon procurement. It's strictly military. Forget the policy considerations. Now, I am amused. Built into this bill is this naive belief that Israel's got such fantastic technology. My God, we're going to integrate them with us, and we're going to have all this great Israeli technology. Israeli technology sucks, okay? David's Sling—it's good at subsonic, low-level rockets. That's about what it's good for. Taking out a ballistic missile? Forget about it. Useless. And yet this is going to be a way to pump more money into the Israeli economy, which is struggling right now.

## **#Lawrence**

Big time.

## **#Larry**

Yeah. But let's look on the bright side. We're going to saddle Israel with a lot of our expensive weapons that are also crap. You know, that was \$4 million per PAC-3 missile. Yeah. And you've got to fire two of them to take out a \$50,000 drone. Oh boy, that's smart. So, listen, our entire system is broken in the United States in terms of foreign policy, defense policy—if we even have one—and procurement of weapons not being done as part of any national security defense strategy at all. It's about, hey, you know, which corporation needs a big boost? And you've got to give Lockheed Martin credit, man. They appear to be sitting on the top of that pyramid, more so than all the others—the Raytheons, the General Dynamics, et cetera. Lockheed Martin has placed itself front and center in raking in the cash.

## **#Lawrence**

I look for them to make a run on the submarines soon. They don't have everything yet. Submarines are really riches now. When you look at it, I mean, the cost overruns right now—if Congress enforced the law that it passed, both the attack and the ballistic missile submarine programs would be canceled because they're so far beyond schedule and so far over cost. The law says they should be canceled. But they're not going to do that because they're arguably our best deterrent.

## **#Nima**

Yeah. Colonel, Democratic House Armed Services Committee ranking member Adam Smith, he's now calling for a Section 224-style provision for Ukraine. What is that?

## **#Lawrence**

We didn't even get to talk about that. I'm sure Larry was ready to shoot some bullets there, too. But this is getting to be just—I won't say comical, because it's not comical. It's tragic. And it's tragic on both sides, Putin's side and our side. And Donald Trump had the ability to step in. And as he said, remember, so dramatically, "In 24 hours, I'll settle this." Well, it's been more than 24 hours, and he hasn't settled it. And as far as I can tell, he has divorced himself from it. And it's getting bad. It's getting worse and worse every day.

## **#Larry**

Yeah, in fact, if you had to place bets, will we see an expansion of the war with Iran or an expansion of the war with Ukraine? It's going to be Ukraine. I mean, I think Russia is on the verge of starting to hit targets in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, for starters, and then extending it beyond. If these drone attacks on civilian targets continue, Russia's going to expand that. Putin is under significant pressure to expand the war. It's not like, you know, where instead of facing public pressure saying, "Oh, let there be peace, you know, stop, stop." No, it's just the opposite. It's like, "Hey, Putin, go kick the shit out of them." And, you know, he's trying to hold the Russians back from just turning Europe into a smoldering pile of rubble.

## **#Lawrence**

And I think that if he were to attack one of the smaller countries, or even a larger country—assets in that country that he knows positively are attacking Russia or aiding in attacking Russia—I'm not sure Donald Trump, if they invoked Article 5, would do anything about it.

## **#Nima**

Larry, why is Donald Trump arguing that he wants to meet with the Supreme Leader of Iran? And he has—he wants to—what is that? Because the Iranian foreign minister said that—what is this? This is so strange. Yeah, yeah.

## **#Larry**

Hey, this is—he's going to—he wants to do for Iran what he did for North Korea. Yeah, meeting with Kim Jong-un. You know, this is, again, it goes back to where we started off our conversation earlier, that Trump is now taking seriously the possibility that Iran does have a functioning nuclear weapon. This was all, you know, what we've seen in the course of even last year when Tulsi Gabbard said that the assessment of the intelligence community was Iran didn't have one, and I think it was right. That was correct. But the final blow, or what really sort of ignited Iran into reversing course, was the attack on the 28th of February.

You know, look at it from Iran's standpoint. They're sitting there saying, look, we have spent—let's go back to 2014 with the start of the negotiations for the JCPOA. We have repeatedly tried to play

by these international rules that the West tells us we need to abide by. We've opened our facilities to inspection. We had limits on what we could enrich, and we were supposed to get sanction relief. Didn't happen. We were supposed to have our assets unfrozen. Didn't happen. And then the people that we let into these facilities took that information and used it to target and kill our scientists.

I mean, dozens of them. And then, on top of it, they lull us into these conversations, claiming that it's negotiations and we're negotiating in good faith. And we go to Geneva, and we meet with the president's son-in-law and his close business associate, and we tell them we're willing to make a deal. And after all of that, they attack us and they kill our top leaders. They kill our children. There's no rational basis for discussion and negotiation now. The only thing they're going to understand is if we have a nuclear device. And I'm sure Motava said, do it. And that's what's happened.

## **#Lawrence**

It would be interesting to the maximum, in Tehran or in a neutral situation—Geneva, wherever—to watch Donald Trump sit down with his Iranian counterpart. I mean, it would be fascinating. I mean, aside from everything Larry just said that I might say too, it would be fascinating. I'd love to see something like that happen just for the drama of it, especially if they allowed the cameras in and filmed the whole thing for the American people and for the Iranian people and for the globe.

## **#Larry**

I would just add one thing to that. We'd also have to have a separate room, camera setup, with, like, Lindsey Graham sitting there and Bibi Netanyahu, so we could watch their heads explode.

## **#Lawrence**

Yes, yes, yes.

## **#Nima**

Just let me show a photo, because what has happened with the case of this school in Minab, where those kids were killed, has had a huge impact. Today, you go to Iran, you see the whole society is feeling that panic of killing these kids. And one of the photos that came out today is this one. This guy, he's the father of that little kid who was killed in Minab. He still sleeps alongside the grave of his son three months after he was killed. He's there, he just keeps going there, sleeping there. He's not going back to his home. And this is the impact, just emotionally, of what has happened. It's unbelievable to talk with the people.

## **#Lawrence**

Well, I won't say little things. It's incidents like that that change the whole warp and woof of war. And you don't know it. You don't understand how serious that becomes in the relationship you might have during the war with your enemy and after the war with your enemy. But it's sometimes centuries before those kinds of things are forgotten. And they live in people's minds for a long time. Not so much Americans. Americans don't do more than 10 years or 10 minutes. But other people do. Other people do. There are people in Vietnam who still kind of feel that way about what we did in Vietnam. And I'm sure there are people in Afghanistan and other places—Somalia.

Libya. Good Lord, the record since 9/11 is just incredible. We've actually had more days of active war since the turn of the 21st century than we had in the period from the beginning of the 20th to the end. We did an analysis. We figured it out—days and hours of war, countries at war with, and damage done: KIA, WIA, and so forth. And then you throw the sanctions on top of that—the study showing 38 million people, half of whom were women and children, that we killed with our sanctions since the turn of the century. It's not been a glorious period. And that's an exemplar of that. Yeah. As is all of Gaza.

**#Nima**

Yeah, it is. Thank you so much, Larry and Col. Wilkerson, for being with us today.

**#Larry**

Yeah, we're here to end the week on a cheerful note.

**#Lawrence**

Sorry about that. You're going to the beach, right, Nima?

**#Nima**

There is no beach.

**#Lawrence**

No beach? No. You got a lake or something around there?

**#Nima**

Yeah, you have to go to São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro or something. Yeah. But here we don't have it.

**#Lawrence**

Don't you have a big lake or something like that around there where you can go swimming or camping?

**#Nima**

No, we have waterfalls. A lot of waterfalls. Beautiful.

**#Lawrence**

Tall ones? Really big ones?

**#Nima**

Big ones. Too big.

**#Larry**

Yeah, you don't want to go over the waterfall. Standing under is fine. Don't go over it. Yeah, exactly. I never do that. Important safety tip. Yeah. All right, we'll see you Monday. Thank you. See you soon. Okay, bye-bye. Bye-bye.