

Iran's Missiles HIT Kuwait & Bahrain After US Strikes Qeshm Naval Base | Mark Sleboda

Military affairs and international relations expert Mark Sleboda joins the show! Mark's boosty <https://boosty.to/therealpolitick> LIKE the video and 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/spiritho> #trump #iran #iranwar

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's Danny Haiphong here. I am joined by military affairs and international relations expert Mark Sloboda, good friend of the show. Mark, good to see you again.

#Mark Sleboda

Danny, thanks for having me. It's always an honor and a pleasure to be on your show.

#Danny

Of course. It's always an honor to have you on the show, Mark. All right, everyone, hit the like button as you come on the show. That helps boost this conversation in YouTube's algorithm, and it's very much appreciated. So let's get started, Mark, with this. The strikes last night—overnight, there was a round of strikes. The United States and Iran have two differing accounts of what happened during these strikes. So let me just pull those up. First, the Iranian account. The statement from the IRGC is as follows: four oil tankers attempted to pass through the Strait of Hormuz last night. One of them was hit, and the other three were turned back. Following this, the U.S. targeted the islands of Qeshm and Sirik. According to CENTCOM, they say it was a naval base. In retaliation, we struck U.S. bases in Kuwait as well as what remains of the U.S. Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

And the United States bears full responsibility if we completely close the Strait of Hormuz. So there is that ongoing, rolling threat to close the Strait of Hormuz fully by Iran, which has been made a few times in the last month alone. Here is CENTCOM's version. They wrote a whole article, actually, on X

about this. They defeated the missiles and drones launched by Iran, according to CENTCOM. They say Iran fired missiles toward Kuwait and Bahrain in the hours after CENTCOM shot down four Iranian one-way attack drones launched toward the Strait of Hormuz. The attack drones posed an immediate threat to regional maritime traffic. U.S. forces subsequently struck Iranian coastal surveillance radar sites in Garuk and Qeshm Island to defend against further maritime attacks.

Initial assessments indicate six of the missiles launched by Iran were intercepted, and seven didn't reach their intended targets. Of course, here is CENTCOM showing their video footage of the radar stations that were hit. So, Mark, help us understand what's going on here. You know, this is the second retaliation in as many weeks by Iran targeting the same area—Bahrain and Kuwait. Iran claims damage, and in many respects, they have already demonstrated a lot of proof of being able to damage U.S. military assets in the region. CENTCOM is going on with the narrative that they are invincible, nothing has ever gotten through, and nothing got through this time around. So what's your understanding of what's going on here and what has happened?

#Mark Sleboda

OK, so first of all, let's just completely dismiss CENTCOM's claims. I mean, they're just straight-up lying. And we know that because satellite data has been published about their repeated claims after these naval and air skirmishes. And as far as they're concerned, nothing has ever been hit by the Iranians. And we know that is false. We know that extensive damage continues to be done to the targets that Iran is hitting. And CENTCOM's claims of intercepting every missile and of no damage being done are 100 percent false.

And I mean, that is a continuation of the same type of narrative that we were fed by the United States while the full-on conflict was raging for two months. And it was only in the aftermath of these things, when the denial couldn't be continued, that the U.S. grudgingly acknowledged the extent of the damage to its bases and to the infrastructure and facilities of its Gulf state vassals, you know, coming out bit by bit in drab admissions in the Western mainstream media. So to understand what's been going on here for the last couple of weeks, we keep seeing these repeated skirmishes where the U.S. attempts to either attack or intercept ships bound in or out of Iranian ports in an attempt to enforce their counter-blockade of Iran's ports.

And every time they do that, Iran is now responding with strikes of their own, not only on U.S. warships that would be conducting such an interception or strike, but on U.S. bases in the Gulf state countries throughout the region as well. And simultaneously, the U.S. is attempting to sneak ships through the Strait of Hormuz under its quote-unquote guidance. And every time they do that, these ships come under fire, and then there's an exchange of skirmishes again. So what we see is both sides are attempting to deteriorate, to erode the effectiveness of the other's, of these dueling blockades, right?

Now, the New York Times has claimed that the U.S. has managed, it was sometime in the last week, that at that time the U.S. had managed to sneak some 70 vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, largely by hugging the Omani coast at night with signals turned off. That's not completely implausible, but I have not heard any verification from any non-U.S. source, any independent tanker traffic player, or anyone else that that is what has been going on. So I'm rather skeptical of that. I'm going to chalk that up as a maybe, but likely still in the aspirational, right? And that's what they want to be happening. And this latest scenario was exactly that. The U.S. attempted to sneak some ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran moved in to attack those ships. The U.S. fired back. They fired back, and there's a pause. But anyway.

What I think is important to understand about the situation is, one, this is a geoeconomic game of chicken, right? That's the best way to understand what is going on. Iran is driving the car of their economy. The U.S. is stuck driving the car of the global economy, the global energy markets, and the global economy. And they're both, you don't want to say hurtling towards a precipice or hurtling toward each other, however you want to take a look at it. And it's a matter of who can withstand the economic and social pressures first. That is the phase of the war we're in. But it's important to understand that this is a new phase of the war. The war is continuing, right? The war has not stopped, nor is it paused. Both sides are still struggling for strategic competition against each other in this quote-unquote ceasefire phase.

And this is a ceasefire, non-ceasefire, much like exists with Israel in its attacks on Gaza and Lebanon. In fact, I see this directly out of the Israeli playbook, whereby Israel, making these small attacks all the time while claiming that the ceasefire is still in effect, is normalizing a state of affairs where they are free to conduct strikes on Iran at any moment, right, where it's normal for them to do so. And that's something Israel has done very well, again, in Lebanon and against the Palestinians. So the U.S. is attempting to erode away Iran's leverage in this phase of the conflict. They're attempting to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, vice, you know, the phase of the direct war that ended. And Iran is becoming increasingly aware of this quote-unquote ceasefire trap that they're in, and they're worried about, you know, there's two different simultaneous things going on.

One, economic pressures are building on the U.S. because the whole global economy is hurtling towards this cliff, with oil reserves around the world, including in the U.S., at record lows. And that has helped ameliorate the effects of the crisis so far, but that's coming to an end. And in particular, Europe is going to get hit hard in just a few weeks because that will be it. And, you know, the effects on not only crude but oil products like jet fuel and diesel, that's going to start to have major effects on the U.S.'s European allies in much the same way as it's already affecting its Asian allies. Well, Iran is worried about this erosion of their leverage if it is occurring.

And you could argue that that itself is a narrative construct. They have changed their responses to the United States, where before it was, you know, the U.S. does something, they attack or they attempt to sneak something through. Iran responds, the U.S. responds, they respond. And it has

largely been symmetric, right? It has been proportional at the very least. Now, Iran in the past few days has started to change that calculus. And what we've seen is that Iran has started making disproportionate responses, where the U.S. will do something and they will launch attacks on five or six bases scattered around the Gulf states, as well as firing at U.S. warships if they get too close and so forth. And that is how Iran is attempting to escape from this ceasefire trap.

They are trying to, in effect, escalate their way out of it, and if they become increasingly nervous about that, what I think we'll see is that they will take a step further. And rather than playing this reactive game where the U.S. does something and they respond, they will have to go on the escalation offensive. They will have to start moving up the escalation ladder, where I believe they still have serious escalation dominance with their ability to strike the Gulf States' energy infrastructure—the east-west pipeline across Saudi Arabia to the port of Yanbu, the desalination plants in the Gulf States, the potential for cutting the fiber optic cables, the internet cables underneath the Strait of Hormuz, the ability to close the Bab al-Mandab Straits.

All of these things are very powerful escalatory steps, if asymmetric, that the U.S. just doesn't have an ability to stop at this point. So Iran may be forced to bring the U.S. to heel in this by taking steps up that escalatory ladder of their own rather than reacting to what the U.S. is doing and only moving up in response to this. The U.S.—Trump—is playing it very cool. And he continues to make nonsense statements about deals being just around the corner and memorandums of understanding and everything. And I think we have to read this all as nonsense, primarily directed at manipulating the energy markets and keeping them calm and depressing the prices to drag this out without, you know, that big inflationary jump in oil prices that is inevitable, but they're trying to delay that inevitability as long as possible.

Meanwhile, we don't have, I would say, a firm understanding of how things are playing out on the ground in Iran. There are reports that inflation in Iran is up 80%, and that is certainly going to cause social pressures. But then again, this is also an existential conflict for them, and they can endure a great deal of suffering, as they have before. And there are no signs of any significant ethnic minority splits or the U.S. being able to manipulate events on the ground to mobilize specific segments of the population against the government. There are no signs of that having any effectiveness whatsoever. So Iran seems pretty stable. And at the same time, they're doing everything they can to increase their avenues of trade land-wise across Eurasia.

Well, land and internal seas, shall we say, because they're using the north-south route with Russia across the Caspian. And that is something that the U.S. and Israel are at least not easily able to touch. But also, there are reports that they are beginning shipping out oil, even if at a obviously much decreased capacity, via railroads to Pakistan and directly to China as well. And of course, lots of other trade being conducted that way. And Pakistan, you know, being quite helpful to Iran in terms of trade, at least opening up lots of land corridors and trying to take advantage of the whole fact to draw extra economic activity to their own ports as a substitute for Iranian ports in this situation.

So it's a very complicated geoeconomic and strategic military situation playing out at the same time. But it's important to understand that while in Iran the intensity of the fighting is less, the geopolitical stakes are just as high, if not higher. And Trump actually made some honest statements, you know, in between his just absolutely unhinged regular social media posts, which you have to start to wonder how calculated are they, even in the unhingedness of them. But he made one candid statement to the press acknowledging that Iran's strikes, whatever CENTCOM may be claiming about acting in self-defense, are actually a response, a retaliation to what the U.S. is doing.

And he admitted that in conversations with the press, you know, while sitting in the Oval Office. And he also was asked a question, you know, about how he would define a ceasefire and if he would define what is going on, and you know, the ceasefire is still in effect. And he said, in this part of the world, a ceasefire simply means a moderation of the shooting, right? A lesser-intensity conflict. And, well, yes, but only because the U.S. and Israel continue to make ceasefires in that regard, because it is, you know, another tool in their toolbox. Right now, the U.S. at least seems to believe that this sub-level of conflict is playing out in their favor. I don't believe that time is on their side, but they seem to believe it is. And I don't agree with them, but it definitely makes me nervous, and I'm sure it must be making the Iranian political and military leadership nervous as well, which is why they're trying to shake the rules of this game as they are evolving with these new, unproportional responses.

#Danny

Yeah, well, certainly the behavior is different, but yet a continuation of the war, as you said. And, you know, it's just so interesting because the United States, especially Donald Trump, has been very calm and has been making strange statements in reaction to these things, and even just to the war in general. You know, because we do have videos, we do have images of what's happening. Every time Iran responds, CENTCOM will then deny it. But then you have Donald Trump, and this is just an image of the whole Fifth Fleet attack, which, for all intents and purposes, the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain is not really standing anymore. It was hit very hard in the initial wave of strikes. And they won't even show you—I mean, the United States will not show you any of these attacks.

#Mark Sleboda

Same thing with CENTCOM in Qatar, hit very badly, that it is inoperable.

#Danny

Right, and they won't show anything related to that. But Trump was in Wisconsin, and he made a very interesting conclusion. He first said that the situation right now with Iran is not really a war, it's a conflict, and then he calls it a war later. I just want to play this because I think it goes to show that there's a lot of narrative management going on, and it doesn't always go on very well.

#Donald Trump

And this is during a military conflict. I call it that because it's really not that much of a war. We'll go pretty quickly because I have to get back to fighting the war in Iran.

#Danny

So that was literally yesterday in Wisconsin, talking to American farmers who have been hit very badly by the U.S. war on Iran and its economic consequences. But yeah, Mark, you said that there might be reason to be nervous that the U.S. is acting so calmly right now. But yeah, it's just so—I don't see how the United States, given all—and maybe you can talk to this too—there are some limitations. Now there are reports coming out of even just the MQ-9 Reaper drones now facing shortages. Everything seems to be very short because of this war. How does the United States even move forward from here, given that they seem to want to fight some kind of war with Iran for at least the foreseeable future?

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah, so, um, there is obviously a lot—you describe it as narrative management—and there is a great deal of this going on. So we can bring this back to, I think, some terms that are attributed to Karl Rove about a new reality, and that it is delivered today largely by narrative, that we will continue to act and, you know, remake narrative, remake reality as you sit back and study what we're doing. And this attempt to, in the face of all the evidence that we can see from satellite evidence and everything, Trump just continues to deliver big, stinking piles of nonsense to the mainstream media, which, even as they conduct more fact-based reports, show that the opposite is true, right, with the amount of damage being done and the interceptions and everything.

And at the same time, whenever they're on camera with Trump, they don't dare challenge him in any way. They don't dare say that the emperor has no clothes. That is because they get banned from the presence of the God Emperor of Mankind and are no longer able to report on it. So they're attempting to reshape the reality of the conflict through the narrative, which is something that we've continually seen also in the conflict in Ukraine, where it's quite evident that the reality on the battlefield is something different.

But they simply refuse to acknowledge that reality and attempt to erode it away over time by their construction of the diplomatic narrative. It's take your pick about whether it's just an ignoring of reality or whether it's a very cunning stratagem to get themselves out of bad reality-based situations. But you're right that the U.S. has so many limitations moving on. You know, the most impending one, of course, is, you know, the energy crisis. But we've also got these other simultaneous economic crises of all these economic activities that are by- or side-products of the oil and gas extraction and refining industries.

One of them, the production of urea fertilizer, is one of the reasons why this crisis is hitting not only U.S. farmers. I mean, U.S. farmers are being hit hard, but farmers all over the rest of the world are being hit harder, even, of course, than they are in the United States, with the price of fertilizer going through the roof because such a significant portion of it is being, you know, blocked through the Strait of Hormuz. And that's really going to badly affect the Global South, the very vulnerable parts of the developing world. I mean, there's going to be starvation as a result of this in vulnerable Global South countries. And I think we need to recognize that.

It's going to get very bad within a few months. But there's also helium, right, which is vital for high-tech industries, and aluminum, and numerous other of these types of economics. But there are other limits that the U.S. is facing too—limits that I and several of the other guests have been sounding the alarm or the exultation about, if you want to look at it that way. And that is the U.S. Achilles' heel in munitions, in particular their air defense, whether that is with the ineffectiveness of their air defense, be that the Patriots or the Israelis' David's Sling and whatnot, but also the extreme lack of interceptors and their ability to increase production rates.

And we've been saying, some of us, you know, for a long period of time that the numbers are getting really low. They can't do this. They can't do this. They're going to hit up this limit. Boom, they've smacked into that wall. And now it's a hard geopolitical limit on what they can and can't do. And I believe they are very hesitant to push this back into full-scale conflict because it's painfully obvious that they can't defend Israel. They can't defend the Gulf states from Iran's ballistic missiles and increasingly even their drones in this situation. But it's not just their defensive munitions, it's their offensive munitions as well.

The standoff munitions, these expensive and limited-in-number Tomahawks and the JASSMs, air-launched cruise missiles—critically low inventories of both of those—where the Western mainstream media has openly acknowledged that the levels are so low that it is going to take the U.S. years, up to a decade, to replenish those numbers just to the already critically low level it was before they initiated this war on Iran. And that's assuming that they don't get themselves involved in any other serious conflicts between now and then. And an acknowledgment that this is putting them at an extreme disadvantage if geopolitical situations arise, you know, that devolve into military situations with Russia or China or potential, you know, other players out there as well.

And the U.S. is still forced to use standoff munitions because, despite whatever Trump may claim on his social media to the contrary, Iran's air defense still exists to a very significant degree. And we have, again, these leaked stories from the intelligence community who are obviously trying to manipulate the situation. And I think probably some of these leaks are coming from different factions within the U.S. deep state, within the intelligence community and the blob—some who want to escalate the conflict and some who seem to recognize how bad the situation is for the U.S. and are trying to sound alarm bells. It's important always to understand that the U.S. deep state, the blob, the permanent bureaucracy, is not a monolith.

And we're at one of those points where we're seeing substantial fractures coming to the surface. And they've been openly warning that Iran's air defense innovations are allowing them to track the U.S.'s stealth aircraft through combinations of thermal imaging and cameras scattered around the country, with information collated by AI that maybe aren't quite as effective in an immediate sense as active radar. But on the other hand, it makes those detection abilities invisible to the U.S., right? So they can't have their air defense systems hit as soon as active pinging with radar is turned on. And we've openly heard that the Pentagon is afraid of this. That's why they don't—all Trump's nonsense to the contrary.

For the vast majority of that phase of two months of open conflict, the U.S. and Israel stayed out of Iranian airspace for the vast majority. They had to fire standoff munitions from Iraqi airspace, from the Gulf of Oman, elsewhere, wherever they could, because they were afraid to move in. And right at the tail end of that two months of hot war, we saw this, um, really a farcical episode that was all probably about the U.S. attempting some special forces operation to try to seize the nuclear dust—yeah, the nuclear dust—from the area around Isfahan. And you saw U.S. aircraft falling, falling, falling, falling because they did attempt to enter Iranian airspace at that point, and they paid the hard price for it. And then were very quick to move into this new phase after that, because they got smacked hard.

And when the U.S. intelligence community, or factions within it, is leaking to us that they believe Iran can outlast the U.S. blockade, right, that in the game of dueling blockades or a geo-economic chicken, Iran actually has the advantage, and they believe that Iran would last that, or warning about these extremely low levels of their munitions and warning about the effectiveness of Iran's air defense innovations as they've been playing out during this conflict. And I really do think that we're seeing very different things coming from Trump and the people around him, and some very different voices emerging from the depths of the U.S. deep state in an attempt to prevent this increasing geopolitical strategic blunder that Trump has made by attacking Iran from getting any worse. So there's... there's a lot of moving parts around this.

And, you know, I imagine if maybe not to as much a degree, but there must be some disagreements within the various groups, strata of the Iranian political and military leadership on how to move forward. You know, there was a question about moving to a ceasefire at all, and now that they're in this ceasefire, you know, they're trying to decide how to maneuver within it, or if they should just jump out of it back into direct conflict, if that might actually play out more to their benefit than whatever this rather—I must say, I find it rather annoying—this whole game going. I don't think I'm alone in that, you know, this game of skirmishes and back and forth while we're still, you know, trying to gauge the economic damage, the economic attrition that is tallying on both sides, and all of this, and kind of dimly aware that when we're talking about things at the strategic level of economic attrition and everything that...

#Danny

That's going to affect all of our pocketbooks at one point or another along this, right?

#Mark Sleboda

Even those of us who are, shall we say, patriotically waving the Iranian and Hezbollah flags in all of this.

#Danny

Yeah, well, you know, I wanted to ask you because it certainly is in this phase of, you know, pinprick strikes from the United States, and then Iran retaliates, what they say, just as hard or 1.5 times as hard. And that feels like it could actually go on for quite a long time, especially considering that the United States has few other options other than to strike harder.

#Mark Sleboda

I wanted to ask you about that.

#Danny

Or the opposite—the exact opposite—which is to stop, to end the war, actually.

#Mark Sleboda

Which is why they're not doing anything else. They're staying in the status quo because anything else they could do, other than continuing, would make the situation worse for them.

#Danny

Right. Yeah. And I think in the game of economic attrition, it would accelerate, of course, the very harrowing contradictions that now seem to be—I don't know if it's just manipulation and whistling past the graveyard, or maybe things are going to get worse slower than what some have predicted. But nonetheless, any major escalation would speed up things quite dramatically, especially on the oil front. But I want to ask you something about this. In terms of the reality of the military situation, a lot of people have been sharing this image from CENTCOM, which is actually dated back to May 9th.

But it gives an idea of exactly what is happening and how these pinprick strikes might be occurring. And here you have what's an obvious photo. I'm not a UAE expert, never been there. Never been to Dubai, never been anywhere in the vicinity of the UAE. But everyone's been saying that CENTCOM, they shared this image of an F-16 refueling over an undisclosed location. But everyone points out that it's actually Palm Jumeirah in Dubai. Yeah.

#Mark Sleboda

I'm not even intimately familiar with the geography there, but even a non-Middle East expert like me can immediately identify where that is.

#Danny

So, again, this is, I guess, Pete Hegseth's CENTCOM. But nonetheless, I guess what must be happening then, Mark, because we don't—of course, the U.S. is trying to narrative spin and, you know, we don't get the reality of how they're conducting these strikes—but it seems like this must be what's going on. They're refueling over these countries bordering Iran and using what is left of their standoff. Do you believe that they're using these standoff munitions now in almost like an attritional way because they are limited?

They can't go forward harder than they are, so they conduct these limited, maybe daily, you know, maybe every other day, once a week, because they can't fire more. And if they get closer to Iran, well, yeah, those air defenses—some have said the technology is like infrared, you know, they can detect heat, and so there's no way you can cloak yourself like the F-35s are supposed to be able to do. So, is that what you feel like is going on here? Is it that the U.S. conducts these strikes in this manner? They're just standing off somewhere in these areas, refueling and just firing, right? Because, I mean, the UAE is quite close to Iran, ostensibly.

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah, of course, that's what they're doing, right? You know, this is standoff munitions. And obviously, the inventories of the U.S. would allow for a continuation of this lower level of conflict for much longer than it would if it was, you know, an outright, full-scale renewal of direct warfare between the two of them. And on one level, right, I think the important level of what's happening is the geoeconomic war of attrition between the two of them that the U.S. is playing out, right? Also trying to manipulate events, even if in the short term with Trump's social media posts, these occasional strikes, and so forth. But I think that there is probably a military problem, strategic and even tactical, level of what's going on as well.

With these strikes and retaliations, the U.S. is attempting to suss out Iranian air defense over the Strait of Hormuz, right? And everything right now is pretty much concentrated, uber-concentrated on that exact area of Qeshm Island, Kharg Island, Bandar Abbas, right? The legions are focused. Everything is—all the U.S. strikes are right there. They're attempting to suss out and perhaps even weaken Iranian air defense capabilities and radar. You know, if they're successfully hitting that, of course, this is a big part of that. In case it becomes, you know, the order comes down for Trump that, you know, screw this, you know, let's drop some bombs again in a big way. They're attempting to position themselves to use these skirmishes to their advantage—to suss out, to identify the enemy, and to weaken it if possible.

#Danny

Well, speaking of attritional warfare, how about we talk about, I guess we could say, the broader Ukraine conflict situation? But in particular, Russia just held the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. I believe it just ended, if I'm not mistaken, and I wanted to just pull up what happened in the last day. Russia says hundreds of Ukrainian drones were downed right as the economic forum was ending. The defense ministry said the drones were downed over 16 areas and regions, including St. Petersburg, Crimea, and over the Azov and Black Seas.

Now, this has been a major part of all developments coming out of the conflict, especially in the Western mainstream media. All we hear about is these drones Ukraine is able to hit inside of Russia. They're hitting oil targets there. There were a couple of, I think, targeted attempts on the economic forum itself, the St. Petersburg one. But along with the narrative that Ukraine is also winning on the battlefield, this is kind of almost surprisingly, or maybe not so surprisingly, a narrative that persists. And that Russia, in response, has fired off on Kiev more than a few times. And this is being framed as Russia's last gasp.

Or what? I think Al Jazeera called it the last... or is it the New York Times? The last argument that Russia can make in the war. It can't do anything else. It can't win on the battlefield, so it just fires these missiles at Kiev as a way of reacting. So, Mark, what is actually going on, and how does it relate to these fronts? Because Ukraine keeps going on and on and on. And it's my understanding that, you know, U.S. military aid has diminished, not because Trump wanted to end the war, but just because there's less to give. Yeah, yeah. But yet the fight continues. So help us understand the situation now.

#Mark Sleboda

When it comes to comparing, first of all, we have to acknowledge that attritional warfare is certainly back as the major form of conflict after a few decades of absence. But when it comes to attritional conflict, we can talk about the long-range strike and economic war of attrition of the U.S. and Israel versus Iran. But then, you know, the Russian-Ukrainian-NATO conflict steps in. And when it comes to attritional warfare, they say, yeah, hold my beer, right? You know, because it's entirely a different scale of attritional conflict. Now, I would rather call this the last gasp of Western propaganda, or if not the last gasp, the last gasp before they go silent for a time and then attempt to reconstruct things later on. Things are going very badly on the battlefield for the Kiev regime, and the Western mainstream media is not acknowledging any of it.

I mean, they just finally quietly admitted after Deep State Maps, right? There's a quote-unquote independent, um, pro-Kiev regime mapping project that is directly working with the Kiev regime's military intelligence. And they finally quietly admitted that Pokrovsk is in Russian hands seven months after it fell. That is largely what they're doing now—ignoring the way things are playing out on the ground with all of the admittedly slowly building but now snowballing pressure of Russia's

spring offensive rolling into a summer offensive, along with a declared new long-range strikes campaign against Kiev. But at some point over the summer, all of this so-called stalemated battlefield, or even Ukraine's turnarounds, or "winning on the battlefield," it's all going to go up in smoke.

And there's a number of these hard-fought flashpoints, in particular Konstantinovka, which is the tail end of the Kiev regime's last defensive line in western Donbass, this urban agglomerated area that all kind of rolls together—Slavyansk, Kramatorsk, you could even say Druzhivka and Konstantinovka. And Russia has been fighting in and to the flanks of Konstantinovka for a good six months now. But it's finally starting to tell. And you don't have to take my word for it, because the Kiev regime commanders and the social media interlocutors are screaming bloody warnings about what is happening in Konstantinovka, about the crumbling defenses there. And however much they might try to downplay or just ignore the situation and not talk about it at all, it is a very significant development on the battlefield.

And Konstantinovka falling is going to aid the speed at which those last two defensive strongpoints, you know, the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, fall as well. And it has to be said that Russia is in the suburbs of both of those places right now and advancing every day, another settlement or two, clawing their way ever closer to it during a week. And the same thing is going on in Zaporozhye, where the Kiev regime was claiming all kinds of nonsense successes in western Zaporozhye. What they really managed to do is slow the Russian advance there, but that was at the cost of the Russian advance in eastern Zaporozhye just completely rolling over the Ukrainian defenses there because of lack of manpower.

And now the eastern Zaporozhye Russian offensive is moving very quickly on the Kiev regime's strong point of Orekhov, which is in the west. But they're moving on it from the east because that's how fast they're moving there, you know, in the relative terms of this conflict. And at the same time, Russia continues to take a settlement here, a settlement there, every week in the northern front of the conflict, in the Sumy and Kharkov areas as well. So Putin made comments during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum that, you know, the deaths of Russia, whether we're talking about what's going on on the battlefield or economically, are wildly exaggerated, right?

And Putin did it, quoting Mark Twain, actually. And Russia is taking ground constantly all along the contact line. And eventually they're not going to be able to deny it. You know, when it's, um, shall we say, strongpoints and, um, you know, forest lines and hedgerows, it's easy for them to deny it's happening. But sometime in the next month or so, when Konstantinovka is in Russian hands and they're not able to ignore it any longer, you know, that whole propaganda narrative is just going to go up again. We go through cycles of this, right? You know, where they're forced to admit things, and they've been peddling another.

And they're continuing the drone strikes, you know, and these demonstrative attacks facilitated by continual movements through NATO airspace in the Baltics to strike, you know, where Russia has

relatively weak air defenses compared to, you know, say, Moscow, where they're not really able to get much of anything through. They're able to get a few through in the St. Petersburg area because Russia isn't geared up to defend from the west or the north there, because obviously they don't share anything like a border. And these openings up of the drone corridors have allowed them to get a few through. And they continue, I mean, because the CIA and NATO are mapping this all out and planning this all out. And the US, the Pentagon may be less directly involved, but the CIA is actually escalating things against Russia under the cover.

So for instance, in the St. Petersburg attacks, they actually, in order to make sure they got something through and created this nice, pretty pillar of smoke for social media and television cameras, that was a storage tank. And it's just not that much of a loss. You know, it's a soft target. It's not really doing any economic and certainly not any strategic damage. These are 85% PR attacks, right? This is, again, about the same type of narrative management. Only a lot of it is played out with these Hail Mary long-range strikes. So they're skimming low over the Gulf of Finland and coming around from the north on the oil facilities near St. Petersburg and on Kronstadt, the naval island there. Because NATO identified through their reconnaissance aircraft where there might be a window of opportunity. And have these attacks on St. Petersburg done any damage? No.

In fact, just like last year, we were told that all of these refinery attacks are destroying the Russian economy and everything. And then in about two months, Reuters admitted, actually, there hasn't been any significant damage. Russian oil exports were only reduced three percent, and they more than made that up in the increased cost of the oil they were selling, because it's a finite commodity, and you put less of it on the market and the prices go up, and they still make bank on whatever they are selling, even if it's at lesser volumes. And that's even more true now with the compounded effect of the global crisis. So all of these oil refinery strikes in the St. Petersburg area in the past month, including these demonstrative, you know, humiliation attacks—if only humiliation won conflicts on the battleground in Ukraine, you know, the regime and NATO would already be at the Urals.

But unfortunately, that's not the case. Instead, the Kiev regime's defenses are crumbling all over the country. But Bloomberg just reported—I just saw the report yesterday, sometime in the last couple of days it came out—that Russia's oil revenues over the last year, taking into account these last two months of all of these drone attacks that we've been hearing so much about, dominating all the coverage of the Ukraine conflict, what is the net result of them? It's that Russia's oil revenues have increased 32% year on year. That's it. We had an admission in the Wall Street Journal just over a week ago that the Kiev regime is hitting Russia's energy infrastructure, their oil infrastructure, but struggling to dent Russia's economy. There we are again. Russia's economy, particularly when it comes to energy of various sorts, is a behemoth.

And these are pinprick attacks that are more about affecting narratives and perceptions in the Western media and forcing us to talk about them as well, you know, rather than spending more time on what exactly is going on in Konstantinovka or Raya Aleksandrovka, or these other important flashpoints on the battlefield, because that is the intention—this shifting of the narrative and the

focus. And we see this playing out diplomatically, because over the last week, while Ukraine is supposedly turning everything around and winning, we had reports from Europe that the Germans, the French, and the British now suddenly want to start talking to Russia about ending the conflict before the winter. And Zelensky sends an insulting letter to Putin. Right. We're at the very end of insulting him. Yeah. Yeah. He says, let's meet and let's have a talk.

#Danny

Yeah.

#Mark Sleboda

And we hear the U.S. would also, of course—Trump wants to at least have a ceasefire in effect for the midterms. I don't know why he thinks that would help him in the elections, because Americans never vote on foreign policy. No. I mean, your audience, you know, you're special out there. You know, you're not the normal American.

#Danny

No, and the Ukraine conflict is very far out of the... yes, yeah.

#Mark Sleboda

You know, the rest of the sheeple don't pay any attention to foreign policy when they're voting in the U.S. Which is nonsense, of course, because that's where the president's powers are, right?

#Danny

And that's the growth industry in the United States.

#Mark Sleboda

But anyway, that aside, they're obviously pushing now on the diplomatic front and hoping that all of these pinprick attacks, again, the hope is some type of social imbalance in Russia. They had hoped to create it with the sanctions and everything else, and that just didn't have the effect they wanted. It didn't immiserate the Russian people. In fact, if anything, exactly the opposite. Russia has exploited the situation, and their economy has benefited in many very serious ways that I can see on the ground here.

But then, you know, now it's about these terror attacks on buses and girls' dormitories at colleges and everything. They're trying to stir up public sentiment in Russia against the SMO and thus against Putin and the Russian government. It's not having the effect they wanted. I'm here on the ground, and whatever they may be saying in the Western media, the vast majority of the Russian population,

rather than calling all of this into doubt, simply wants the Russian government to escalate more and quicker against the Kiev regime rather than the opposite.

And we saw this in Putin's responses during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, where he just blew all of this off — this sea of withering questions about Ukraine's impending victory and Russia's collapse — that Putin just rolled his eyes and rolled out all the facts, the numbers about the economy and the SMO and everything else that they don't want to acknowledge or talk about in the Western media. He just deflected all of their questions with all of this. And when it came down to the question of Zelensky's letter, right, and this, well, we should see about ending this conflict now.

And, you know, Putin said, I don't see that there's any need for us to meet, right? You know, that if they want to agree to our terms and settle things, and then we come together to sign something, well, we still have questions about Zelensky's legitimacy. But theoretically, right, that's possible after an agreement is reached, right? That's not the way real diplomacy works — not this PR games and photo ops, you know, that they will attempt to spin. What's more, he then immediately deflected that question and started talking about the military men fighting in Ukraine, saying that it was really a question — this Zelensky letter and these calls from Europe talking about talking with Russia — because that's still the phase that it's in, let's be honest about that. And he says that it's really about the men basically saying that we will let our fighters on the ground speak for us, right? That's our diplomacy right now; it's playing out on the ground. And they're just deflecting this narrative, this attempted reality-construction machine of the West. And the two situations are obviously quite different in how the wars are being conducted, but in both the conflict in Ukraine and the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, there is this powerful narrative propaganda machine that both Russia and Iran have to deflect and ignore at various times and make sure that it doesn't infect the memetic space of their own populations, right?

Because that's, you know, part of any national defense concept — control of your own information space. And I think both of them are doing that fairly well, whatever may be the nonsense that may be playing out on the pages of the Western media any given week. Again, there are always various kernels of truth that emerge from it, hidden in paragraph five on page ten and things like that. But that's what our job is.

That's what we're here for, people to draw on your show — for people like me and Brian Berletic and others to help bring to your attention the things that they can't hide, that we can then show to justify the arguments we've been making about what the real situation is all along. And I think in the last five years of this conflict, we've worn out much better than the Western media in the alt media, by and large, right? You know, again, not unanimous voices all exactly on the same page in the alt media, but by and large, much better than the nonsense that comes out of the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal or anything like that. God forbid, the Washington Post — Bezos, right?

#Danny

Right. Well said, Mark. I want to make sure everyone knows that in the video description, they can find your Boosty account where they can subscribe to you and follow your work. You do a lot of independent work on your own, Mark, so people can support you there. It is on the video, so I'll put you solo. So when you point to it, it is there — yeah, right there, right there, to the right, to the right, or at least our left there, right, your right. Um, just quickly, Jolly Pop says, are you retired U.S. Navy, Mark? Are you? Is that— I'm not retired. I didn't do 20 years. I did six years in the nuclear engineering field, in and out. So that is, you know, honorable discharge and left the service, and you know, you know.

#Mark Sleboda

Ooh, big re-enlistment bonus. And I'm like, no thanks. Had enough of that. Quite out of here.

#Donald Trump

Six and out.

#Mark Sleboda

So not technically retired, but yes, a U.S. Navy vet.

#Danny

All right, everybody. Well, it's been a great show. Mark, we're going to head out of here together. I want to make sure I thank everyone who gave us Super Chats and became members. Thanks, Anna. Thanks, Jolly Lollipop and Empire We Are. Empire We Are frequently gives.

#Mark Sleboda

Anna, Jolly Lollipop, love you guys.

#Danny

Yeah, great. Everyone who moderated, thanks so much for your time today. Everyone who watched, yes, thank you as well for your time today. Hit the like button before you go — that helps continue to boost the show. In the video description, you can find Mark's Boosty account and all the places to support this program. And furthermore, tomorrow I'll be back, 12 noon Eastern, with Richard Wolff, Sunday, June 7th, 12 noon Eastern. All right, everybody, take care. We're out of here. Bye-bye.