

Larry Johnson: Iran's New Red Line: The Resistance Axis Strikes Back

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#Nima

What happened yesterday was the attack in Dahia — finally, the Israeli attack. It was an empty building, as they mentioned after the attack. I don't know if they knew that the building was empty, but the attack happened. They wanted to assassinate some Hezbollah commanders, but they managed to kill some ordinary people who were close to the building. Then, about the Iranian response — yesterday, when I did a podcast, a monologue, I didn't know if Iran would respond or Yemen would respond. I thought that Yemen would respond to what happened because they literally didn't kill any of the Hezbollah commanders. So that's why I thought that, since it was an empty building, maybe there would be a response from Yemen — some missiles from Yemen. But Iran decided to respond directly, to send a message. What was the point? Before getting to what is going on between Iran and Israel, what was the point of attacking that empty building? Did they know that the building was empty?

#Larry

No. Destroy the peace process. You know, what Pepe and I reported more than a week ago — so, a week ago Thursday — the information we received was that the Iranian Supreme Council issued a warning to Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan, saying that they were going to stop, they were withdrawing from all nuclear talks, they were not going to deal with any kind of nuclear framework like the JCPOA, and that they were prepared to detonate a nuke to show their seriousness. And that information was conveyed to the United States by Pakistan. Throughout this period, Pepe and I have been told through the source that Pakistan remains very optimistic about its prospects for securing a peace agreement — a peace deal that will be called the Islamabad Accords — that will be the United States and Iran signing off.

And I think what they'll sign off on is basically something that Trump will be able to present as, "I've prevented Iran from getting a nuclear weapon." That'll be the thing. And I'm surprised this narrative really hasn't picked up much. But, you know, there was the New York Times story that came out Saturday talking about how Israel has increased its spying on Trump administration officials because they're trying to figure out what the hell the Trump administration is doing with Pakistan. You know,

what is this deal? What's the deal? Because Israel is scared to death that they're being cut out of the deal — which they are. That's true. Well, you know, that was a leak orchestrated by, I'm told, Elbridge Colby and another Defense Department or War Department official who are advocates for a settlement with Iran.

And so the fact that you had this intense—this was deliberately leaked in order to paint Israel in the worst possible light. Because, you know, when I first heard, oh, Israel spying on the United States, it's like, yeah, no shit. And the sun comes up in the east. I mean, surprise, you know. What, gambling here in the casino? How could that be? Okay. So it was one of those, I'll call it a Casablanca moment with Claude Rains. "Oh, gambling at the casino. Let's arrest those people." But we've also got then the change in Trump's demeanor. I mean, he looks bad, but he has not been saying the outrageous things he was saying three, four weeks ago about Iran. In fact, he's almost, like, conciliatory.

So he's keen on getting a deal. So this was Bibi Netanyahu, and then the Iranians themselves had declared that any further attacks on Beirut, they would retaliate. And, you know, they warned the people in northern Israel, you know, get the hell out. You know, we're coming after you. So this was a deliberate effort by Bibi Netanyahu. I think he ordered the strike knowing that Iran would respond, that Israel would get hit, and then Israel would use that as a justification to bring the United States into it, and that would kill the deal. Didn't happen. Trump basically said, no, you stay out, and tried to talk him out of doing any kind of retaliation.

And then I guess the last thing he said was, well, if you do it, you're doing it without us. You're on your own. So here's, you know, the Israelis, I think, actually had never thought that Trump would leave them hanging. And Trump left them hanging. And so they responded with, you know, Iran fired that first volley, five waves, four missiles per wave. So a total of 20 missiles hitting a variety of targets in Israel. But it wasn't, you know, it was more designed to say, hey, we told you not to do it. So here, you know, we're smacking you upside the head a little bit, but we're not really punishing you. And at that point, Israel, instead of listening to Trump and holding their fire, decided to retaliate.

And they lose, I think, about 11 missiles. They hit five, at least five different sites, several of them sites that they believe the missiles had been launched from. So what does Iran do a few, you know, like an hour later or half an hour later? They fire more missiles at Israel from those very sites that Israel had hit with its missiles. They basically said, hey, fuck you, you didn't lay a glove on us, that kind of thing. And then I believe Israel responded after that. Iran has since responded again. And the really important development that people need to pay attention to is what Larijani—let me pull this up because it's... there it is.

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Larijani, the head of the Council of Experts?

#Larry

Yes. They call it the Expediency Discernment Council, Sadeq Larijani. I guess, was it his brother? Exactly.

#Nima

His brother was the head of the Security Council, the head of the National Security Council.

#Larry

Okay. So Sadeq Larijani said that, and let me quote, "...Iran's intervention in support of Lebanon constitutes a formal declaration of a new strategic doctrine under which attacks on any component of the resistance axis will trigger a response that extends beyond geographic boundaries and reshapes regional equations." Now, Larijani said that Iran has entered a new phase in which it no longer waits for threats to emerge before acting to preserve its regional positions. So this is something really new. Iran is taking the initiative. He also warned, apparently, that any expansion of the conflict or attack on critical Iranian infrastructure would be met with a comprehensive and deterrent response.

So we're in new territory now. So basically, continued attacks on the Palestinians and Lebanese—Iran's going to continue to respond. They're going to continue to hit Israel with one missile after another. I think we're in, I'll liken this, this is sort of like the 12-day war, where by day 10, Israel was pleading with the United States, "Oh, get us out of this, help, help." But I think Israel's going to be pleading for help long before that. I think they'll be able to endure about six, seven days of this, and then they'll be, you know, tapping out, saying, "Okay, please get us out of this." And I don't think there's any exit this time.

#Nima

There was a phone call, Larry, last night after the Iranian attack in response to what Israel did in Dahiyeh, in Lebanon. And the phone call was between Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu. Donald Trump came out and said he told him not to attack Iran. Then we had Israeli media, for example, Channel 12, reporting that Israel was not going to respond after that. But we had the response from Israel—the attack on Iran. So, what was that phone call, and what do we know about that phone call? It seems that Donald Trump tried to convince him, but he couldn't do it after all. What is the picture coming out of this? Because when you come out as the President of the United States, as someone who's responsible for this war, this war of choice—you started this war—and you're trying to convince Benjamin Netanyahu, who convinced you to go to this war, he's the main reason for this disastrous war, and you're not able, you're not capable of convincing him not to attack or to calm down?

#Larry

Well, it's not a matter of convincing. It's a matter of Trump deciding to withhold aid, to cut off aid, to cut off military cooperation, and withdraw personnel. And so far, he's not been willing to do that. But this deal with Pakistan hangs in the balance. Trump really wants that deal. It is genuine. And the Pakistanis—the last information I had—the Pakistanis were optimistic that it was going to go through. Now, that said, I still think there are some Iranian demands that the United States will be unwilling to meet, which will prevent this thing from being implemented. But it leaves the United States in a very difficult situation because Iran's got the strategic initiative right now.

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Israel says that they're not going to accept the new equation in the region. The new equation is what you just mentioned with the case of Larijani, Sadeq Larijani, the head of Iran and the Council of Experts in Iran. And when he says that, to many people who don't know what the Council of Experts is, Larry, when there is a problem between the Guardian Council and the Iranian parliament, the Council of Experts comes in and somehow brings the two sides together or makes some sort of decision. It shows how important this council is when they're talking about the new strategy, the new equation of the region. If they're going to go preemptive, maybe if they feel that Israel is going to do something. The main point, I think, in this new message that you've just read for us is that they can go preemptive on Israel.

#Larry

That's exactly right. Again, let me read the key phrase. It said, a formal declaration for this new strategic doctrine is that attacks on any component of the resistance axis will trigger a response that extends beyond geographical boundaries and reshapes regional equations. This is a new policy. This is something that Iran has not done in 47 years. And it is now tying its own security to that of the Lebanese people and the Palestinians. So this is—I see it as really a declaration of war against Israel.

#Nima

There are people in Israel, like the head of the opposition, Yair Lapid. He said that this war, the continuation of this war, is not going to benefit the state of Israel. Is he trying to buy votes, or what is that?

#Larry

Yeah, it's called no-shit analysis. Yeah, hey, if you jump off a 50-foot building with no parachute, you're going to break your legs, if not worse. Yeah, it's in that same category. Yeah, no kidding. And that was what I found so powerful about the message yesterday by Iran—that within a half hour of Israel launching its attack on those specific sites in Iran, Iran turns around and launches missiles

from those sites. Wait a second. I thought, you know, again, destroying the myth of Israeli invincibility.

#Nima

Now, Israel said, Larry, that the United States didn't participate in the attack on Iran, but they helped to defend Israel. What did they do, and what were the capabilities used to defend Israel?

#Larry

My understanding is the United States is essentially standing down. You know, there's a lot of confusion out there, too, about, you know, there was a bombing or a couple of bombs went off, allegedly, at Prince Sultan Air Base, initially blaming that on Iran. Iran said, no, that wasn't us. Then they tried to blame it on the Houthis. Again, I don't think that was the Houthis. I think that came from someone, a group connected with Israel, to make it look like it was Iran or look like it was the Houthis, because the Saudis and the Qataris have made a decision to now move away from their reliance on the United States. They're going to enter into this new strategic—call it a strategic partnership—that is being crafted together, assembled with Pakistan in the lead. It will involve Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. And behind it all, I don't want to call them puppeteers, but this is sort of the vision of the Chinese and the Russians.

#Nima

The other important point, Larry, in the new announcement by Sadeq Larijani, he mentions all of Lebanon, not just Beirut.

#Larry

Right, right, including southern, you know, especially southern Lebanon. So there's, you know, I know some have speculated that Iran will sell out Hezbollah—just the opposite. They've made it now clear: Hezbollah, we got your back, we're here.

#Nima

That's why we have Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel, which is, we know there are people in Israel who agree on the policies in Gaza and Lebanon, but they want to kill him. They just want to remove him from power because they know this guy is not going to leave his position while he's alive.

#Larry

It's going to stay there until the last moment. That's why the fight is important. What's happening in Israel is important as well, to bring it into the equation. Yeah, well, Bibi in recent photos, he doesn't

look good either. You know, Trump looks terrible—he's got a flushed face, his face is the color of my coffee cup. And then, you know, yelling, and, you know, Netanyahu as well. He's got cancer, and, you know, that usually eats away at you. And, you know, who knows if he'll be alive by the end of this year. But if he goes, that doesn't change Israel's policy, because this policy about destroying the Palestinians and even taking territory in Lebanon, that remains. I think a majority of Israelis are still backing that.

#Nima

I think the outcome is basically forcing Israel to withdraw totally from Lebanon. Because if you're there, you have to attack. You have to fight. If you fight, it's going to be a new escalation. And these cycles of escalation are going to happen to Israel. I don't know how long the United States can stay in the region, because we know Donald Trump, as you've mentioned, is not happy because of the global economy, because of the pressure that is coming from each and every aspect of this war. And then, is it affordable for the United States to stay there? We know that Benjamin Netanyahu wants the United States to stay there. But after all, at the end, it's the United States that decides whether it's affordable for the United States to stay there or not.

#Larry

Well, what do you mean by stay there? Do you mean to maintain?

#Nima

To maintain the blockade, to maintain some sort of military presence, or maybe send more weapons to these bases in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, or maybe try to improve the bases in order to help Israel.

#Larry

Well, yeah, so there's the problem. Number one, the U.S. has basically been driven out of many of the bases that they did have. And, you know, particularly like Al Udeid, the Combined Air Operations Center was an important command, and that reportedly is closed down now. Prince Saud Air Base, the U.S. presence there is under pressure to withdraw. So I guess we still have some presence in Kuwait. But, you know, Iran attacked that repeatedly this last week. Then you also see, you know, they went after Bahrain. The U.S. still had some very sensitive, critical facilities—I'll call them communications facilities—that were in Bahrain that were destroyed. And what I've heard is that the U.S. command, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his people, believe that could only have been done with the assistance of either Russian or Chinese intelligence sharing with Iran.

So the U.S. ability to maintain the kind of presence it had before, that's gone. They're going to have to spend billions, billions of dollars to try to rebuild some of these sites. And it's not just a matter of not having the money. The Saudis and Qataris, according to the Pakistani source, have made the

decision that they're not going to continue hosting the United States. They're going to tell the U.S. to get out. They're going to take their chances with Russia and China. And it'll all be part of this new security architecture that Pakistan is playing a leading role in trying to construct. So you get Egypt involved, Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia. And these military forces become like NATO or the CSTO for the Russians. So a security organization for the Persian Gulf that excludes the United States.