

Lt. Col. Anthony Aguilar: Iranian Drone Takes Down US Apache Helicopter - War imminent?

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#Nima

Hi, everybody. Today's Tuesday, June 9th, 2026, and our dear friend, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Aguilar. Welcome back, Tony.

#Anthony

Thank you. Thanks for having me. It's great to be on and have this discussion, as there's a lot going on.

#Nima

Yeah, exactly. I want to start with the latest news that Donald Trump announced. He posted that, "I have just been informed by our great military that last night the Iranians shot down one of our highly sophisticated Apache helicopters while patrolling over the Strait of Hormuz. There were two pilots involved; both are safe and uninjured. Nevertheless, the United States must, of necessity, respond to this attack." And here is what we've learned from the Iranian side: they said the American helicopter was not flying over international waters, and they will respond decisively and immediately to any American attack on Iran. It seems that Donald Trump, as he mentioned in that post, is going to do something in response to what has happened. And from what's going on in the Middle East, we know the complexity of the issue right now. But what would be the response? What would you say if you were an advisor to Donald Trump? What would be the response to what Iran just did?

#Anthony

Well, first of all, I want to provide context to the audience on the Apache helicopter and this shutdown, allegedly by a drone, potentially. So when you look at this particular helicopter, the Apache helicopter is an attack and reconnaissance aircraft. I have not yet seen anything from

Central Command as to whether this was a US AH-64 Apache or an AH-64 Apache Longbow, which is even more advanced than the standard platform and has more capability for surveillance and reconnaissance. So regardless of the type that it was, it's clear that helicopters do not have ejection seats. If you're the pilot and your helicopter is hit, you don't jump out or eject.

You ride the aircraft to the ground. So the aircraft wasn't blown up out of the sky. It was critically damaged to where it went down in the water. It went down in the Gulf of Oman. So we know that it went down in the Gulf of Oman, as verified by CENTCOM, because CENTCOM said that the two pilots were initially rescued by a U.S. sea drone. So they were in the water. So in flying this helicopter, they either ditched where it was hit, which would have been over Omani airspace in Omani territorial water, or it was hit in Iran and was flying back to get to a safe or neutral area in Omani water rather than Iranian water. But the bottom line is that this aircraft was conducting military operations, and it wasn't sitting on a runway somewhere.

#Nima

Sorry for interrupting you, Tony. It was an AH-64.

#Anthony

Yes, I know. Yes, the AH-64 Apache helicopter has two versions. Yes, there's the standard version, and then there's the version that's called the AH-64 Longbow, which has an additional surveillance system beacon on it. You can easily tell them apart because the AH-64 Longbow, out of its top rotor, has a large pod, a dish-like looking thing. So again, I don't know if this was the AH-64 attack model or the AH-64 Longbow armed reconnaissance model. I believe that it was likely the AH-64 Longbow attack reconnaissance model because they were conducting armed reconnaissance. And then their return. And remember, let's go back to about a week ago when the U.S. struck an Iranian oil tanker with a Hellfire missile that was fired by an Apache helicopter.

They are conducting armed reconnaissance in the Strait of Hormuz, to the south of the strait along the Gulf. So considering this shoot-down, if I were the advisor to the president, I would look at that and say, "OK, well, sir, you made it clear that your red line for escalation was any U.S. deaths — not wounded, not helicopters, not jets — but any U.S. deaths would be your red line to then reenter hostilities directly between the United States and Iran." So Donald Trump is kind of pushing his red line forward a bit and saying, "Well, this cannot go on without response. This cannot go unpunished." So if I were the advisor to the president, I would advise against escalatory strikes. I would advise against re-escalating hostilities with Iran and looking at this in terms of, "OK, we are at war."

We are trying to maintain this very fragile, on-its-life-support ceasefire that Donald Trump continues to insist is still in place. By Iranian measure and by my measure, I would say that that ceasefire is done and gone. That ceasefire is out the window. But if Donald Trump wants to give the impression

that there is this fragile life of a ceasefire, then this should not be responded to with hostility or strikes. Um, if it is going—if Donald Trump is insistent, “Nope, I've got to demonstrate strength, I've got to strike,” then I would provide him, first and foremost, military advice to hit targets with tactical significance, not operational or strategic.

I wouldn't go after Qeshm Island. I wouldn't go after Kharg Island. I wouldn't go after Tehran. I wouldn't go after mainland targets. I'd probably go after a target in the Strait of Hormuz — a fast boat or an Iranian anti-ship missile capability somewhere on the coast. I'd go for something that I can directly relate to this thing most likely fired this thing that shot down this, or guided it, to prevent further escalation beyond this engagement. If you consider the engagement from an Iranian self-defense perspective, if this Apache Longbow helicopter was flying in Iranian airspace, then would Iran have the justification to shoot it down because we are still at war?

Even in the midst of a ceasefire, we're conducting a militarily hostile act. So Donald Trump can look at it in terms of, OK, we're at war. We committed a hostile act. They responded. Leave it at that. If Donald Trump were insistent to say, hey, give me options that are responsive, I'd say, OK, well, let's go after a tactical target. If Donald Trump were to insist on an operational or strategic target, Qeshm Island or mainland Iran, I would advise the president that this is likely going to take us into another round of escalation directly between the United States and Iran, while we know that Iran and Israel are back at it again because of southern Lebanon and strikes near Beirut.

So we're just restarting the whole thing again, depending on how Donald Trump responds. And Donald Trump needs to consider his response very carefully because Iran has demonstrated, as they have with the Israeli strikes, that they will strike back hard. So Donald Trump really has to consider this response. If he's considering a response, it should be limited. It should be tactical. And he or the U.S. Central Command should make it very clear what the exact objective is and why that objective is there.

#Nima

Tony, here is what Pompeo said, and he's trying to convince Donald Trump, because people like Pompeo and Lindsey Graham are trying to convince him that the continuation of the war would benefit the United States, would benefit Israel, and that the effect of that, the benefit of that for Israel, is going to contribute to the United States. Here is what he said.

#Speaker 03

IRGC and those leaders who are still there in control of those weapons systems, it will be very difficult to find a pathway to deliver the outcome that the world needs, which is the free flow of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Look, they've threatened to close the other strait as well. This is a theocracy. They are determined. We need to continue to have enough resolve to achieve victory. President Trump wrote about getting surrender and capitulation. I'm confident he's not tired

of winning, and he will deliver a solution that gets that for the United States, Israel, and our Gulf Arab partners.

#Nima

What these guys, when they're arguing we have to do something in Iran, mean is that you have to do some sort of military operation on the ground. Without that, you're not going to achieve anything. Do they know what they're talking about when it comes to the military aspect of the operation, the way they're talking about it?

#Anthony

Well, first of all, I hope that Pompeo is not advising the president. What is he? There's "former" in front of his title. Who cares what he says? He's obviously a paid Fox pundit. He's a war hawk. He's talking about war, war, war, when he himself will not have to relish in any of the consequences or what may come of that. I think Mike Pompeo now is not credible. I hope that the president is not listening to him. And the same with Lindsey Graham. Lindsey Graham is a war hawk. Lindsey Graham is a Zionist. Lindsey Graham is paid off by the Israeli lobby, as well as Mike Pompeo. They are talking heads. They go on Fox News for sound bites.

And they want to draw us continually into war, to continue to draw us into a never-ending war. A continued war goes against precisely what Donald Trump's entire campaign was when he ran in his second term. But additionally, at this point, the United States would be best to find a way out, to leave with some type of feathers still left in the tail. So we're looking at how do we leave? Is it the uranium? Is it making a deal? We know that there are—there is, I call that rumors intelligence. It's not confirmed, but there is rumor that there was potentially a \$3 billion release of assets that was paid to Israel through Qatar, probably brokered by Pakistan, to make that payment for Iran to not strike back against Israel.

So we're looking at various negotiations trying to be made. For the United States to retaliate at this point, what does it do? If the Iranian Navy is sunk to the bottom of the sea, if the Iranian Air Force is destroyed, if Iran no longer has any military capability, as Donald Trump just said as of two nights ago, if they're pretty much disintegrated, as he said, why retaliate? If they are all of those things—disintegrated, falling apart, on the verge of collapse—they have no Air Force, they have no Navy, they have no military capability. Well, then how did they shoot down an Apache helicopter? How did they shoot down one of the most advanced military helicopters in the world if all of that capability is gone?

And if it is, if that's the narrative that Donald Trump wants to continue, then retaliation in this particular case only brings us into escalation that will not achieve any type of tangible outcome, tangible military objective towards ending this war, towards any types of negotiation. It only stands to re-escalate the entire thing. And somebody needs to tell Mike Pompeo and Lindsey Graham that

the United States is not in a winning position right now. We absolutely are not. So as much as they want to continue to talk, talk, talk about war, war, war, they aren't looking at the implications of what we have available in the region and what the escalation could be from Iran if this escalates beyond Donald Trump's control.

#Nima

Tony, the difficulty in West Asia, in my opinion, is not between Iran and the United States. It's between Israel and Lebanon right now, as the escalation is happening there. That's why we had the Israeli attack on Beirut, the Iranian response, then the Israeli attack on Iranians, then the second round of the Iranian response to what Israel did. And it seems that, as time goes by and with the situation in the Strait of Hormuz right now, we have the blockade—two blockades, the Iranian blockade and the U.S. blockade. And then when it goes to Lebanon and Israel, it's a fight. It's a war happening there. Israel is attacking, you know, after the Iranian attack, and then they somehow back down, but they're attacking the southern part of Lebanon.

Lebanon, as we talked. Yes, yes, in the city of Tyre. What is that? What do they want from Lebanon? Is that because they feel that there is something going on between Iran and the United States? That's why they're attacking or escalating the war to the southern part of Lebanon? Or is it something else, you know, because they want to capture the land? So far, we've seen the capabilities of Hezbollah, how they're capable to fire back, to fight back. Today we had some sort of infiltration in the northern part of Israel. How do you see that battlefield between Israel and Lebanon?

#Anthony

Well, the battlefield between Israel and Lebanon has become the quintessential strategic cost-making battleground in this conflict because we see that if Israel continues to incur into Lebanon, Iran will respond. They've made it very clear that Lebanon is now considered part of their collective defense in standing for an end of the war not only in Lebanon but in Gaza, and that they will continue to make that part of a deal. They've made it very clear: you strike into the north, you strike Beirut, we will strike. They did that. They made it clear that they would. Now that there are these strikes happening in the south again, again in Tyre and again across the Litani, it's simply just pushing and pushing and pushing those red lines.

Israel wants to continue the conflict with Iran, with the United States taking the brunt of it, with the United States fighting the war along the front for Iran so Israel can continue its war in Lebanon. And there is no negotiation or capitulation that Lebanon can provide that will ever satisfy Israel other than giving Israel all of Lebanon. It doesn't stop at the Litani River. It doesn't stop with, oh, if Hezbollah stops and leaves us alone in the south, we'll leave. And then, hey, Lebanon, you're good to go. Israel never leaves whenever they go somewhere, and now they're going to create buffer zones or they're going to create defensive zones. They'll never leave.

They'll continue to incur. Israel will not be satisfied until they have all of Lebanon, everything south of the Litani, and then everything north of the Litani as a buffer zone against what they perceive as a possible threat. And what they don't understand, or they understand but don't accept, is that as long as they stay there, they will continue to face resistance. There's resistance because they're there. So, as we've seen, they have no intent to dislodge from their occupation of the south and to continue military operations in the south. And Iran has made it clear that that needs to end. Any incursions across the Litani north into Dahiye or Beirut, that's a red line.

But you also need to get out of Lebanon. And we haven't seen that yet. In fact, we've seen, just right now as we're speaking, Israel's attacks continue. So, I think that the battlefield between Israel and Lebanon has become the actual hot zone, the hot war of this greater conflict. But any type of tactical error or tactical mistake or miscalculation can then draw the entire region back into a greater war. So this is much like in the days leading up to World War I. You know, the day before World War I, on July 23rd, did we think that we'd be in World War I? No, we saw all these things that we see now. There's a little bit of this going on.

There's some of that going on. There's this war that if something there happens, it could impact this. And then, boom, you know, Prince Ferdinand is assassinated, and that's the spark that brings us all into World War One. If you asked anybody the day prior to that, they wouldn't think that we would be at a world war. So it's a powder keg. And every little thing there—there are more possibilities of escalation and continued warfare present in the current situation than there are off-ramps to peace. So I'm not saying that an off-ramp to peace is impossible, but the likelihood of escalation is much more present.

#Nima

The building they attacked in Dahia, in the southern part of Beirut, was empty. No one was there because they said they wanted to attack, you know, they hit some Hezbollah fighters, their forces, their commanders maybe. And it was empty. Then the operation failed somehow. Then they said it was a symbolic sort of operation. Why do they need to do that, in your opinion? Did they know that there was nobody there and they attacked the building because they wanted to see the Iranian reaction? Or did they want to assassinate some commanders there and the operation failed, and they said it was symbolic?

#Anthony

I think the primary reason that Israel did what they did in the strike in southern Beirut was because Donald Trump said not to. They then had to take the position of, we're not going to be told what to do. You're not going to tell us what we can and cannot do. I think that if they, you know, they always threaten strikes in Beirut. They always threaten strikes north of the Litani. They always threaten that they have the right to strike at any time. That's always part of their narrative and their

condition. So in this particular case, when tensions are high, it's now, okay, well, they always say they're going to do that.

But now if they do it, it brings us into this. So then, you know, Donald Trump's thinking, well, I have to say something. Then when he said, don't do that, now you've got a lot of egos at play between Netanyahu and Trump, and these egos are in play of, you're not going to tell me what to do. You know, the narrative around the world is that Israel is America's puppet in the Middle East. Well, we're going to show you. And then for Trump, he's like, well, the narrative is that Israel is telling us what to do. Well, you're not going to tell us what to do.

So I think that strike was specifically designed for Netanyahu to ease his political strife back home. There are a lot of people on the far right of Netanyahu's government who think he's not doing enough. They're not asking for an end to the war; they don't think he's being hard enough. He's not hardline enough. So doing that is part of Netanyahu's political survival. And I think that had Donald Trump not made a big deal about saying no, no, no, and making it a big deal that he said no, no, no, maybe it wouldn't have happened. I think it was a message, and it was symbolic on behalf of Israel to say nobody tells us what to do.

#Nima

There are some reports showing that Netanyahu last night said to his cabinet that Israel may have to face Iran alone, without U.S. backing. What would that mean? How do you see that sort of situation for Israel, fighting alone without the United States? What are the capabilities of Israel today?

#Anthony

Well, certainly Israel's capabilities have been severely degraded. We know that. Israel is a defense force; they aren't an expeditionary force. Their air force is very good in terms of flying long-range missions—very specific, very limited. They cannot do long-duration bombing campaigns. They can do strikes. Campaigns are outside of their reach of logistics and overall, you know, logistics operations and all the things that make an operation like that work. They just don't have it. They don't have the depth. You know, when we look at how Israel has fought wars in the past on the ground, whether it be against Egypt or Lebanon or Syria—strike very fast, strike very hard, consolidate gains, and go back and hold what you have. This is not that type of war. You can't do that in this war with Iran.

And Iran has a robust capability of ballistic munitions, missiles, and drones. And Israel's defense is running low and low and low. If Israel wants to go in and swing hard on their own without U.S. backing against Iran, they do not have the capability or the means on their own to withstand the Iranian onslaught of reciprocal attacks and strikes. I mean, they can't go in on the ground in force to capitulate an end. They can't bomb Iran into oblivion. You know, people consider this nuclear option, the big, bad, scary nuclear option. And let's consider that. You know, when we used nuclear

weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we killed a large number of people in that initial strike because they were all concentrated in a very, very small, condensed area.

And it wasn't the nuclear bomb or the blast initially that killed as many as it ended up killing. It was the firestorms from the burning buildings, et cetera. So, and then again, did the world go on after not one but two nuclear weapons were dropped in World War Two? Yeah. Yeah. And did the dropping of those nuclear weapons necessarily end or capitulate Japan? No. Japan was already surrendering. They were already reaching out to the United States saying, we surrender, just allow us to keep the emperor. So did those strikes actually end the war? No. Did those strikes end the world? No. Did those strikes put us into a nuclear cloud of dust to where civilization failed?

#Nima

No. No.

#Anthony

Russia tests nuclear weapons all the time. The Tsar Bomba makes Hiroshima and Nagasaki look like a firecracker. Chernobyl, one of the largest nuclear explosions in history. And here we all are. We're still alive. So if Israel were to use a tactical nuke or even its armament of nukes against Iran, they can't destroy everything. And that would then elicit a response that would then bring in Israel—or excuse me, Russia and China. And then Israel is risking the potential of no longer existing, despite the Samson option or not. So looking at what they can do at this point in terms of escalation, they quickly run out of options. They quickly run out of defensive munitions. They quickly run out of interceptors. They quickly run out of the capability to strike deep.

They can hit some hard targets. They can decapitate the regime. They can decapitate the IRGC. They've done that. But we've seen that the government of Iran and the IRGC are resilient and will recuperate. They're not going to defeat them through bombs, and they can't go in on land. So Israel would be unwise and very ill-suited to go against Iran alone without U.S. support directly. I don't mean just sitting in the background helping with logistics. The United States would have to get involved directly. And if the United States is not going to do that, that should weigh heavily in Israel's calculations and their calculus for what they're considering doing in terms of a response. But I think, you know, Donald Trump might be close to the, "Hey, you're in this alone."

#Nima

When you look at the battlefield in Lebanon, do you think that Israel is going to face the same thing as they have been doing? Because many people are arguing that Israel, little by little, basically captured most of the territory of the West Bank, and they're going to do the same in the southern

part of Lebanon. And I don't know, with the West Bank—you know, recently we had, last time we talked about it, the Trump administration said that they're not going to let Israel annex the West Bank. Let's see if that promise still exists.

But when it comes to Lebanon, it's totally different. The whole concept of the war is different. They're using drones. They're using rockets. They're using ambushes. And Israel is not prepared for that. One of the main, in my opinion, one of the main objectives of Israel to attack Dahia was to announce that the people in Dahia, a southern suburb of Beirut, should get out of their homes. It's a hugely populated area, something like 400,000 people, to get out of their homes, to get out of the region.

#Anthony

And again, as they're bombing Tyre right now, that's a very populated area as well. And when you look at what we're seeing, Hezbollah's fight against Israel is classic asymmetric insurgent guerrilla warfare resistance, fighting against a conventional force. And to say that, well, you know, Hezbollah can't hold them off—well, I hate to break it to anybody that thinks that—they are holding them off. They can, they have done so. Look at the U.S. war in Iraq. You know, it was 42 days after the end. So right now we're like in day 100-plus in this war, and we have come nowhere near to some type of tactical victory or any type of mission accomplishment level. We're still trying to figure out where we're going.

In Iraq, we declared victory at day 42. Forty-two days in. President Bush flew onto the aircraft carrier—mission accomplished. We defeated the regime. We had Saddam. We had a mission accomplished. And in doing so, we then spent the other 22 years—we're still there—with a U.S. conventional, the entirety of our conventional big military, fighting insurgents who hit us hard with IEDs and insurgent tactics and asymmetric warfare. Same thing in Afghanistan, where we had militias fighting the great and mighty United States military and the entire NATO coalition. And they won. So to think that Hezbollah can't stand and win against Israel in the south would be a misnomer and is not necessarily accurate with what we've seen in history. So what does Israel want to do?

Israel absolutely wants to take all of the south. All of it. And they want to take all of the south to the Litani River. They want everyone out of it—not just Hezbollah, but everybody out. And then establish a buffer zone north of the Litani, probably about a mile of a buffer zone where they hold that. And then, as we all know, when Israel intercedes into a buffer zone, they only expand that buffer zone. They've done it in the West Bank. They've done it in Gaza. They've done it in Lebanon. They've done it in Syria. So anywhere they go with this buffer zone, they're just going to continue to push, push, push, push, push. For Hezbollah, this is an existential threat. This is a fight for survival. And Hezbollah has the means to hit the ground forces of the IDF pretty hard.

Again, the Israeli Air Force—very capable of strike operations, great aircraft, great pilots, all the bombs, munitions, and jets that we give them. The IDF, the ground forces, quickly get bogged down

when they're facing an asymmetric insurgent threat. We've seen that in Gaza. We've seen that in Lebanon. And Hezbollah is going to continue to take it to them pretty hard. And if Ansar Allah in Yemen get involved to kind of start hitting from the rear, so to speak—because Ansar Allah, the Houthis in Yemen, have munitions that can very easily reach Israel—even if Iran kind of stands back and watches, but Ansar Allah and Hezbollah hit the fronts of Israel from the rear and the front, that could be extremely damaging to Israel's defense capability. They don't have an expeditionary army.

#Nima

If we assume that the report on Axios, which says that a U.S. official said to Axios that the objective right now in the current situation of the war is for Benjamin Netanyahu—he needs to continue the war to stay alive politically in Israel. In the United States, Donald Trump needs to get out of the war, get out of this trap in the Middle East to stay alive politically in the United States. These are two different realities for the United States and Israel. They're not going to overlap. That's why they have to make their own decisions. So when it comes to the calculation on the part of the United States, what do they need to get out of the region? What would be that particular moment for Donald Trump to say, we're done here, we're going to get out of here?

#Anthony

I see Donald Trump's predicament slightly differently. I agree with you, but I would add one more piece to that. But first, I would say with Netanyahu, it's clear for Netanyahu what side of the Rubicon he is on. He has to continue the war for his political survival. Period. He has crossed the Rubicon. Donald Trump is now a snail crawling across the edge of a razor blade. Which way to go? Because if he continues the war, well, he's in a bad spot politically and domestically. If he stops this war, he's in a bad spot politically and domestically because you have people like Lindsey Graham and Ted Cruz and others that want him to continue this war to wherever he even speaks of, "Let's back out from this."

#Nima

Uh-uh.

#Anthony

No, no, we need to fight for Israel. You're going to take this home. You're going to take this in for the big win. So Donald Trump is even in a more precarious situation because he faces political survival and the noose, if you will, the albatross around his neck falls on both sides. So, you know, the only way out that I see for Donald Trump—if Donald Trump is sitting there in the Situation Room and he has his most hardline, hardline base, who's like, if you give up on this, man, we're going to

turn on you, we're going to turn on you, and then we're going to, you know, we'll get enough, you know, we'll turn on you—and with the Democrats that already want you out, we will impeach, convict, and remove.

And then you are done. That's the threat. That's what they're holding over him. He doesn't want to get, you know—and everyone's talking about impeach, impeach, impeach. Donald Trump got impeached twice in his first administration. Twice. The steps in actually making an impeachment mean anything other than a nice piece of paper are impeach, convict, and remove. You need the Senate to do that. So with all these people in the Senate that are hardliners, that are pushing Trump to continue, well, that's something they hold over his head. So if I were Donald Trump, I'd have to—okay, how do I get out then and survive politically? Well, I can't end this war just on a fizzle.

I can't end this war with, you know, "We'll make a deal that they won't get it. We'll make deals so they can't get the nuke." And then all of the war hawks are going to say, "What are you, Barack Obama? We had the JCPOA. What, are we going back to that? No, you're going to finish this." And then you have the opposition to that, as we saw in the War Powers Resolution that was passed. And this is an admonishment and a rebuke to Donald Trump's war, saying, "Get us out of this." This is what I see happening in the very near future. Donald Trump has even kind of alluded to something in the next two weeks that will bring their surrender. Does that mean a nuclear weapon? No.

What I think Donald Trump has planned is a military operation that's going to demonstrate the ability of the United States military to seize the Strait of Hormuz—not permanently, not for a long period of time, a very temporary operation to seize it—to show the world and to show Oman, "Look, negotiations are on. You want to have some type of administrative control shared with Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, fine. But be aware, anytime we want to come back and take it, and you try to play around—look, we can do it." Well, right now, the United States hasn't demonstrated that. We still have to demonstrate that. We have to demonstrate that card. We haven't yet.

We also—Donald Trump must bring something back to his base and to the American people that shows that he has taken away any nuclear potential at all. Whether it was—Iran doesn't have the ambition, they didn't have it, they weren't building the weapons capability—it doesn't matter. The entire predication that Israel will get a nuke if we don't strike, that's why we struck. That's the existential threat. That's the threat to the homeland. That's the threat to the average American. Well, Donald Trump missed the chance to say, "Well, we obliterated it before, so we don't need to do that." He's already said that we didn't obliterate it in Midnight Hammer, so the capability is still there.

So Donald Trump is going to have to do some type of operation to get hands on, to seize some amount of uranium, some amount to then say to the American people, "I, Donald Trump, launched this military operation with our great, exquisite armed forces, and we've taken it. Look, here it is." Like the strike on Osama bin Laden or the capture of Saddam Hussein out of his spider hole. "Here's the picture. We got him." Donald Trump needs something to put on the front page of the New York

Times or whatever—Fox News plastered all over the news—and say, "We did it. We got it. Donald Trump sent in the very best. We got the uranium." Whether that's a Ziploc bag that just has "uranium" written on it, whether it's some kind of silver container with lights and smoke that looks spooky, whether it's a painted rock.

I don't know. If I was Donald Trump, I'd be talking to Hollywood to get me some props to make it look like we got something. Because is it likely that we're going to be able to succeed, to go in and actually get depleted uranium? Not right now. Not anytime soon. Iran can't even get it. So depending on where they have it, it's a mission that cannot succeed in the time that it needs to succeed. Donald Trump needs a way out of this quick, and he can't leave empty-handed. And the thing that he can leave with, like Indiana Jones, where he sees the little icon and he switches it out with a bag of sand, right? But to get out of the temple—that's where Donald Trump is right now. He has got to show the American people something.

And that's not an agreement. That's not a "we'll agree to sanctions" or "we'll lift some," because all that does is go right back to looking like what Barack Obama had. No one's going to put up with that. He has to have something. So I think that in the coming weeks, we are going to see a very coordinated, precise, robust military operation into Iran as Donald Trump's ticket out of this. What happens with the Strait? Up for debate. I think Donald Trump would walk away from that. What happens with the lifting of sanctions? Does Qatar get involved as an interlocutor to start giving those frozen assets back to Iran so then Trump can say, "Hey, it's not me. It's not me doing it. No more wars. We're out of these wars."

Not our problem. I don't care about the Strait. We can do otherwise. Look, we got Venezuela now. Don't need the Strait. As far as the regime, hey, if the people of Iran don't want to change it, we gave them the chance. That's up to them. He can walk away from that. He can walk away from everything. If he can show the American people they can't get a bomb. It doesn't have to be true. It doesn't have to actually mean anything. It doesn't have to be real. He just has to show his base something. And I think that's what's coming in the next two weeks. What we're going to see is some type of very, very deeply planned, coordinated attack into Iran. But again, the more complicated a plan becomes, the more catastrophic the failure can be.

#Nima

Yeah. CNN just reported, Tony, that it was an Iranian drone, Shahed-136, that hit the Apache helicopter.

#Anthony

So that's what I had heard earlier, you know, because this happened. So last night, in the fourth quarter of the New York Knicks game at Madison Square Garden, when Donald Trump got this news, this happened during the game, and he quickly, quickly responded. CENTCOM reports there's a

helicopter down. The pilots are great. They're fine. They're already home safe. Like that. We now know that that's not true. The pilots being safe, okay, probably true. I don't know. And see, that's kind of questionable, right? Because, like I said, in a helicopter, you don't eject. You don't jump out or eject in a helicopter. You go down with it.

That's the only option in a helicopter. You go down with it. So, can the pilot survive? Well, yes, especially if it was a water landing and there wasn't some kind of catastrophic—like the entire thing was just blown up in the air. But if the Apache was hit by a Shahed one-way drone, I can't imagine that there was anything left. Go back, remember the incident that happened at Ronald Reagan Airport when the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter hit the, I believe it was a Delta Airlines commuter jet? I mean, those two things hit in the sky at relative full speed, and there was nothing left but carnage and remnants of mangled metal. So did the pilot survive? Maybe.

Donald Trump... proclaiming they're fine, they're safe, they're already back home. Well, that wasn't true because they were rescued at sea, and they were rescued by a sea drone. A US sea drone is what found them. Can you imagine that, being floating out in the Gulf of Oman? Your helicopter's blown up, and then a drone pulls up, and there's no one on it. There's no people on it. You're like, what's this? Do you get on? Do you hold on? I don't know. But this rescue operation didn't just happen real quick—certainly not in time for Donald Trump to say, everything's fine, nothing to see here, everything's good, everything's fine. But the fact that they were able to hit the Apache with a drone...

This is not some long-range lob-the-ball, hit-it-somewhere-in-the-field thing. If you blow anything up, it's OK. That's a good, you know, anything over there you blow up is good. This was precise. This was precise—to hit an Apache helicopter out of the air with a one-way drone. Not a heat-seeking rocket or missile, not a homing missile or something like that, but an FPV-controlled drone shot against an Apache—that's upping the game. That's a new level of drone warfare that Iran has now introduced. So, opportunistic—did Iran plan that? Probably not. Did they see the opportunity? Sure. Was it planned to take the shot with the drone? I don't know.

Maybe they were like, hey, scramble the coast defenses. Uh, Bob's asleep, we don't have the heat seekers, pull out the drone—and it worked. Um, so oftentimes these are how the march to folly brings us new ways of warfare, by opportunity. So this is huge. If that—I had heard that that was the case—but if Western media is now reporting it, if the great propaganda wall of Fox News is saying it—is it CNN or Fox? CNN, just as bad. So if CNN is saying it, then surely that's at least what the administration will allow them to say. That if this was a one-way drone, one of their Shahed drones, that took out this Apache—now you're talking about a thirty-thousand-dollar drone taking out a hundred-million-dollar aircraft. Yeah, that's huge.

#Nima

I think that's the new equation, because they're talking about it patrolling the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait of Hormuz is part of Iranian territory. That's right.

#Anthony

You're either in Omani territory or you're in Iranian territory. It's one or the other. So, yeah, when people talk about, well, the Strait of Hormuz is an international waterway, blah, blah, blah—well, the Strait itself, in that narrow navigable corridor that's been agreed upon for international passage, is not international water. It's straight through the territorial water of Oman and Iran. So either way, that helicopter—well, we know that Oman is not necessarily on the U.S. side. Oman wouldn't have allowed it openly. I don't think Oman would have taken action to do anything against that helicopter or necessarily, you know, take those pilots prisoner or something like that, but they surely aren't going to be friendly to it. I mean, Oman has kind of sided with Iran on this. So, yeah, wherever that helicopter was flying, this wasn't just a peaceful jaunt, you know, a little joyride.

This was an attack helicopter conducting armed reconnaissance along the coastline of Iran, which in recent times has fired Hellfire missiles at tankers. So is the threat there? Yeah, the helicopter itself. Is there an incursion on sovereignty? Sure, in Iranian territorial water and airspace. Has it demonstrated a threat before? It sure has, presenting real danger. So if you consider it in terms of the legitimacy of a target, Iran would be legitimate or justified in striking it. So again, if I were Trump's advisor, I would say, is this about ego or is this about necessity? Because what military necessity does this achieve? It won't, but it sure does have the potential to pull us into a whole other level of escalation that is not going to end cleanly for us, as in the United States.

#Nima

Tony, if the United States decides to leave the region the way that you've just mentioned, I think the problem for Israel is going to grow and grow so fast, because with the new equation that Iran has introduced in the region, if you attack Lebanon, if you attack, they're going to do—it's not going to be just Iran. We have Yemenis the same way; they're going to respond to Israel. The United States is out. Israel is alone. And Israel wants to attack each and every country without having any sort of response from them. This is the way it was working for decades for Israel. They were attacking, destroying, killing, and assassinating people without having any sort of repercussions, any sort of response from that.

And right now, that equation has been destroyed by the new reality of the war. And this is the United States today. What can they do if we assume the United States leaves the region or stays in the region? You know, the latest missiles that Iran sent to Israel, fired at Israel, they hit many targets in Israel. Yes, they did. Yeah. And this wasn't reported in the mainstream media—Fox News,

as you just mentioned. They don't report on the reality of what's going on. You know, the United States is there. They're still getting hit by Iranian missiles. I don't know what else the United States can do to change the reality there, because it's there.

#Anthony

Well, right now, the United States is on the wrong side of history. We're backing the wrong side. And if we didn't know that 103 days ago or 102 days ago, we surely should see that now. And, you know, when people say, you know, abandon Israel—well, it doesn't have to be abandonment necessarily. It doesn't have to be that draconian. The United States, with all of its power—diplomatically, politically, economically, and militarily—surely, if they had the desire to rein in their ally, they could. The problem with the United States being able to rein in Israel is not the lack of ability, it's the lack of will. Is that will coming from compromise? Because of some type of religious viewpoint? I think if you ask Ted Cruz, it certainly is.

If you ask Lindsey Graham, it's certainly because of money. If you were to actually look and understand the truth in Donald Trump, I think it's probably because of compromise and money. So all of the factors that go into this as to why the United States won't act to leash in, sanction, tame, push back, put Israel back in a box, go back to the question of not can we, but why won't we? And the why, I think, is very disgusting. And mainstream media in the U.S. and U.S. members of Congress don't want the American people to see the real why. We're starting to see it more and more, and it's still trying to be covered up in this facade of patriotism and national defense, and "Iran is an existential threat."

And I'll tell you what's ironic about this whole thing is that in the National Defense Strategy that was just released in 2025—December 5th, 2025—signed by this president, if you go to the National Defense Strategy, it gives his guidance to the force: here's what we've got to do to defend the homeland. And then if you look at the National Military Strategy that derives from that, the enemies of the state, so to speak—where China is our acute threat—we must maintain pace with China militarily and economically. And that is the existential threat: China. Russia is the most immediate threat. We have to maintain pressure on Russia because we're more likely to actually go to a shooting war against Russia. But they're a threat. And then you have North Korea.

Iran was further down on the list of threats to consider or things to keep an eye on. And here we are, with no change in any conditions from what that assessment was made from, that Iran is now the existential threat. And that is who we are going to war with because Israel said so, not because anything in our own intelligence changed to consider that change. And now we stand on the precipice of re-escalating again, and the question of Israel or not, when the U.S. Pentagon, our own Department of Defense Intelligence Agency, has elevated the characterization of Israel's presence in our country as the highest risk to intelligence—the highest intelligence risk that exists. Force protection condition delta, critical.

And what that means is that the identified threat, which in this case is Israel, is an existential threat to our nation's security. And yet, why are we still even having the conversation of whether or not we should be backing Israel? Our own Pentagon identified them as the most critical threat—literally, by the word “critical”—the most critical threat to our security and sovereignty as a nation. Yet we're questioning if we're still going to back them in this war, or in their war against Lebanon, or what they're doing in Gaza. So the only rationality to that is that—do we know what's wrong? Sure. Do we see the evil? Sure. Do we know we're on the wrong side of things? Sure. Do we have the ability to change that and stop it and step over on the right side? We do. So why don't we? And that's what's going to come back.

That's what Americans want to know. And it's not going to—the why to that isn't going to come out in a Ziploc bag full of uranium. The why to that is not going to come out in just the Epstein files. The why of that goes much deeper. But when you look at that and you ask yourself why, why, why, that's a question that has to be answered. And I think that this war with Iran is just an appendage that's grown from that, that we can't walk away from. We can't cut that appendage off. And Donald Trump's—I don't know how Donald Trump gets out of this. But I think that the way he's going to try, and I don't think it'll be successful, but I think the way he's going to try is to put—he'll say it's not boots on the ground because we're not going in and staying.

It's not boots on the ground like the Bush years and the Biden years and the Obama years. It's not that type of work. Send in a special operations package real quick. Go in, hit hard, blow up a bunch of stuff, kill a lot of people, come out and say we did it. Here it is. That's what he's looking for. And I don't think it'll be successful, but I think that's what he's grasping for. I mean, two weeks ago and even this past week, he convened his national security advisers and military advisers in the Situation Room to get briefed on a plan. They're not briefing him on how to make popcorn.

#Nima

Tony, what do you make of these new sections—Section 224—merging the two militaries, the U.S. military and the Israeli military? What does that mean for the United States?

#Anthony

Well, to me, that is just such a threat from within. It's a folly of our own making.

#Anthony

It's a trap that we set, knew that the trap was there, stepped in it, and now that trap is clamped on our foot. And we only have the option to either cut off our foot or die. So what's really the nefariousness of this Section 224? So the actual section, this U.S.-Israeli Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative, that's what it is. In House Resolution 880, which is the House's version of the NDAA, it resides in that as a Section 224, not its own thing. It's a parasite. It's attached to our entire

security budget. So what we saw last week, Thursday, was Ro Khanna and Thomas Massie introduce legislation on the floor to amend the House version to take Section 224 out, and that failed. Going into this week, it's already started today. More will go on tomorrow. That's why I'm up here in Washington, D.C., to continue this or to at least be vocal about it.

It'll go to the floor now, to where the House Resolution 880 with 224 in it. Remember, the amendment to try to take it out failed. So now it goes forward to where the House has to vote yes or no on the amendment. There's not enough dissension in the House to say no to the NDAA. It will pass in the House. Now, what's particularly interesting about the NDAA, which is different than traditional legislation in the process that it passes through the bicameral legislative system to the judicial system to the executive branch for signature into law, is that both the Senate and the House simultaneously have their own versions. In the House, it's born in the House Armed Services Committee. And if anybody's interested in learning about that, go look at who the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee is.

He takes about \$2.2 million from AIPAC money every year, this year alone. And then you have the Senate version. That's Senator Roger Wicker. He took about \$2 million, \$2.1 million from AIPAC just this year alone. So that's where this version of the bill was born in both houses by AIPAC-bought-off congressmen. The House version is going to pass. The only hope we have that 224, or the Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative, gets killed—we have two chances left to kill it. Either it gets excluded from the Senate version—it's in the Senate version. You're not going to find it as Section 224 because theirs is not a House resolution. It's a Senate, it's a joint resolution once it leaves the Senate. So is that language in there? It is. So we have an opportunity to kill it before the Senate votes to get it out. I don't think that's going to happen.

When it comes out of the Senate and the House, that's when they bring the Gang of Eight together. You get the House Speaker. You get the Senate President pro tempore. You get the House chairman. You get the SASC chairman. You bring in the financial advisors from each and the budget people. You bring those together, the Gang of Eight, to determine this bill going forward. So that's another opportunity to kill it. But time is not on our side. And I don't think it's going to be killed in the Senate. And the only opportunity left would be to kill it at the joint resolution with the Gang of Eight. But even then, look at who you're talking about. Mike Johnson? Roger Wicker? You think that they're going to kill it? No.

And the thing is that the way that Section 224, or the verbiage of the initiative, was put in, it's not a standalone bill that can be killed. The only way to kill the U.S.-Israeli Defense Cooperation Initiative is if you kill the entire NDAA, and you can't kill the entire NDAA. By law, a version of it has to pass. You can't kill the NDAA. So, um, now this is where it gets down to, well, who's got more friends? It has to pass. If they get into a throwdown fight in the Senate, and it's like the shutdown like we saw, and we go into that, well, it's going to have to pass eventually. And when it does, who's going to win? Well, who has the power? Well, the Republicans have the power.

Is it likely going to pass? It is. And then our last hope, the last hope for the republic, would be for Donald Trump to veto it if it passed. I don't see that happening. So this, to me, in this year's NDAA, that legislation will pass the way it is. The key for America to wake up and realize is that now we are giving the classified, or the identified and therefore classified, most existential threat to our security and our military—a nation that has committed espionage and spying and sabotage and subversion. And this is not conspiracy theory. The Pentagon, the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General James Adams, has determined that that is Israel.

And now we want to turn around and give them the keys to the vault. The bank robber is in the lobby. We all know who he is. He's taken off his mask. And our response to the nation is, well, here's the keys to the vault and there's the getaway car. We've given them the keys to the vault. But if we don't kill this in the next House, in the next Congress, in the next NDAA, before the Defense Cooperation Agreement—I just call it the DTIC—becomes its own law, that's when they get in the getaway car and it's see you later. So we've got some slim chances to kill it now.

I don't think those shots are going to work, and I think it's going to pass. And I hope that this is a wake-up call to America that now, now we have—the wolf in sheep's clothing has shown that they are the wolf. So are we going to give them the shepherd's staff and say, here, you're the shepherd now, wolf? Or are we going to stand for our sovereignty as a nation and say, no, we're not going to do that? I fear for what's coming. There are some hard days ahead. And if we don't think we're going to get dragged further into this war with Iran based on actions that Israel takes, I think people are being naive.

This will continue. And when people say, oh, it's already been 100 days, it's been so long, blah, blah, blah—show me, show me an American war that we have been in that we haven't stayed for decades. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria. We have forces in Yemen. We have forces in Somalia. We have—you know, how long did Vietnam take? And we left without a victory. So anybody who thinks right now, 100 days, it's been so long, this is over soon—oh, no. This has the potential to go on through the rest of my lifetime, to where my son and my son's son might be fighting in whatever comes of this war.

Who would have thought, who would have thought that there would be kids—not kids, America's sons and daughters—who are now in the army, high-ranking now in the army, who joined the army to go fight in the global war on terror, who weren't even alive when September 11th happened. They weren't even alive. I mean, to think about it, does this war that we're in now have the potential and all of the ingredients that look a lot like Iraq and look a lot like Afghanistan and look a lot like Syria, to continue down a path of escalation, de-escalation, escalation, de-escalation, escalation, de-escalation, and we find ourselves 20 years later still there? It sure does. And if the average American doesn't wake up to that reality, we're all going down with it.

#Nima

I think you're right about the point that this war will continue, and we're going to have it. Let's see what happens. Thank you, Tony, for being with us today. Great pleasure as always, and see you soon.

#Anthony

Well, thank you so much. It's always a pleasure to speak with you, and be safe. I'm sure we will talk again soon. Thank you.

#Nima

You too.

#Anthony

Good luck. Thanks.