

Lt. Col. Anthony Aguilar: US-IRAN DEAL: REAL OR RHETORIC?

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#Nima

What is going on right now, because things are moving so fast. What we've learned so far is that earlier today, Iranian media published a 14-point plan that we discussed with Colonel Wilkerson and Larry Johnson. Later on, we learned from the Iranian foreign minister and Donald Trump himself that this is not the plan they were talking about. So what happened later on is that the Iranian foreign minister had an interview on Iranian media, and what he said — the important points so far — one of them is Lebanon, one of the crucial issues. He said that if they do something, Israel must withdraw totally from Lebanon. I think that's a huge, a big change, in my opinion, if they do that.

The second point is the Strait of Hormuz. He said the Strait of Hormuz will be under the control of Iran and Oman. Based on international law, there would be no toll system in the Strait of Hormuz, but they have to pay some sort of fee — an administrative or environmental fee. The second point. And then the issue with the release of the Iranian frozen assets. He said that once we sign the memorandum, they have to release the Iranian frozen assets. These are three important issues for Iranians. And the lifting of sanctions, we don't know. He didn't talk about that. It seems that's part of the deal as well. And the other important point here is that he mentioned that still in Iran, in the Iranian government, they have the Supreme National Security Council. There are some divisions.

And the people who are not agreeing with some issues, I would assume with the Iranian nuclear program, and some people who are agreeing with the new text that was prepared by the Iranians. And he talked even about what has happened. He said the United States was insisting on zero enrichment. We opposed it. And then at the end, you know, they attacked us. The war happened. So the main issue — the helicopter, that could be a helicopter as well — but the main issue was zero enrichment. If you remember, Donald Trump, before the attack, said, I'm going to force them. I'm going to force them to accept the terms that I'm trying to impose on them. It was zero enrichment, based on what the Iranian foreign minister said. So we have somehow a clear picture of what's going on, basically, with Israel foremost, with Lebanon.

And he mentioned on all fronts, I assume he was talking about Gaza as well. It seems that the issue of Gaza and Palestine was discussed between the two sides. So... when it comes to Lebanon, Tony,

you were in the region. You were in Palestine, Gaza. You know how complex the issue of Lebanon is. Because today, we had Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz saying, Israel is not going to withdraw from Lebanon, from Syria, from Gaza. That's not going to happen. It doesn't matter what Donald Trump is talking about, or what the Iranians are talking about. This is the issue right now. And in my opinion, the complexity of the case between Israel and Lebanon, between Israel and Palestine, is the most important issue right now, even more important than the Strait of Hormuz and the Iranian frozen assets. Your understanding of that?

#Anthony

Well, I think what's really important to understand about these negotiations — and this is my perspective — when we hear “negotiations” or “we're close” or whatever, what goes through my mind is that, okay, when a negotiation started, Iran had a bottom line and other points, and the United States had a bottom line and other points. When you come into a negotiation, a negotiation is looking for where those mutual interests are, where those points of cooperation are, what our bottom lines are — will not, must not, will or will, you know, whatever that case may be. And in each one of these rounds of negotiation and talking that's then been followed up by hostility, each round of hostility hasn't yielded a change to either of those positions.

So we want you to give up the Strait of Hormuz, give up your uranium. You're not getting your money back. We're going to keep sanctions for a certain amount of time, and Lebanon's off the table. No, we don't agree with that. Okay, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb, back and forth. We stop and we say, okay, how about now? Go negotiate? Well, I haven't seen anything that's changed from the Iranian side — and nor have I seen anything change unless this latest round from the United States side has capitulated certain things. Because it's very clear. Iran has made it very clear. Strait of Hormuz? No. It's not going back to the same old way. It is our sovereign territorial water shared with Oman. And Oman and Iran will share it. And we will tax it.

It's not really a toll. It's a tax in terms of the upkeep, the maintenance, the environmental fees. They're fees. Every other strategic waterway in the world has something similar. So Iran has made it clear: it's not going back to business as usual. We will be a part of it. You want to drop the toll, so to speak, that \$2 million entry fee? Okay, but we're not giving it up. The uranium — we're not giving it up. No, no. You want to bring in the IAEA, and you want to bring back in everything that was under the JCPOA and tie it to our sanctions and tie it to our assets? Okay, but we're not giving it up. And Lebanon must end, period. So we know what Iran has said. What has the United States changed or given up that has now brought us to this?

The agreement's almost done. The ink is drying. It's ready to get signed. Because what we're hearing from Iran is there's still some distance here, there's still some concerns. And what we keep hearing from the administration now, from this morning, when I started my drive back from Washington, D.C., to North Carolina, first thing on the radio was, Trump announces the deal is done, closer than ever, waiting for the ink to dry, waiting for the fax to come through so we can sign it,

and you're driving off with a new car. It's ready. And then by lunchtime, it was, well, there are still some things to consider, but we're closer than we've ever been. And then by the afternoon, it was, well, there are still some concerns. And now where are we? Where are we?

Now we're back to the, well... there's a lot of good, but there's still some critical questions. Yeah, we're back to the same critical questions that we were at before this most recent escalation — the Strait of Hormuz, the uranium, and Lebanon. Nothing from Iran's position has changed. So either the United States has changed position, or we're nowhere near a deal. And all we're doing again is going into this rhetoric of "we're near a deal, we're near a deal, we're near a deal," back to "Iran isn't negotiating in good faith." I hate... this is Donald Trump — I hate it. It's a horrible deal. Back to war.

Unless there's something that has changed in the U.S. position, which I don't think it has when it comes to... maybe with the Strait of Hormuz, I could see some... okay, we can... we can massage that. No one pays a toll, so to speak, but there are some fees for upkeep. Okay, maybe we can discuss that. The uranium, okay, maybe we don't take it. Maybe you don't give it to us. Maybe there's some conditions. But the thing that the United States right now is not in a position to put on the table, because they really can't control Israel when it comes to that, is Lebanon. And now comes the question of what has the U.S. given up? Has the U.S. given up Israel? Because the United States may say with Iran, hey, Iran, us, we got it.

We're out of Lebanon. We're not going to give Israel the political backing. We're not going to give them the bombs. We're not going to give them the support. They're on their own. But we can't control Israel. Lebanon—or excuse me, Iran—might be saying now, well, you know what? You made that monster, so you better control it, because if you don't and they continue, this ceasefire is not over. So the U.S. is in a pretty hard spot when it comes to Lebanon. And that now, out of all the critical questions, has become the critical question. Because Iran has not flexed, has not stepped away, has not changed their bottom line with the war ending in Lebanon and in Gaza.

Maybe there's been some discussion about Gaza, but I don't think they've let up on that. But we know for sure in Lebanon. And with that in mind, what has the United States changed in order to make this deal happen? Or there's no deal happening and we're all just being hoodwinked again. I mean, how many times now? I think someone was counting. Last time I spoke with Mario Nawfal, I think it was 36 times—36 times we've heard this "we're close to a deal." Is this going to be 39 times? 39? Is this going to be 40? You know, right? But we've heard there's a deal more times than we've seen a deal, because how many times have we seen a deal? Zero. My position on this, as I watch this unfold, is close.

Well, you know what? The only thing close counts for is in horseshoes and hand grenades. Close doesn't matter. Where's the deal? Show me the money. Show me the deal. Until we have that, where both sides agree. Because the other thing that Donald Trump tried, I think like on maybe the

14th deal, was, here's the deal. And Iran was like, we haven't seen that. So what's going to come out of this? I think that we are just, again, unless the United States has changed its negotiating position with Lebanon, I don't see a deal.

#Nima

Tony, let's assume Donald Trump wants to do something with the case of Lebanon. Maybe he wants to, because he wants to get out, he tries to do something with the Israeli position. What would be that solution? In my opinion, he could say to Israel, you want to stay in Lebanon? You're on your own, and you have to fight it by yourself. We're not going to stay there anymore. We're not going to fight on the territory of the Lebanese people, because Lebanese people—it belongs to Lebanon. You cannot stay there and make it a buffer zone or dead zone, whatever security zone they call it so far. And this is the problem. I think for Israelis, they have a strategic problem with Lebanon. They cannot fight Hezbollah because the war is getting so serious with Lebanese people, with Hezbollah. They're fighting back with drones, rockets, ambushes.

Soldiers are getting attacked by these drones. Everything—communication systems, air defense batteries. And these are huge for Israel, a country like Israel using so far, if I'm not mistaken, there is a report coming out that so far in the recent weeks, or in the last two months, they have lost something like 300 Merkava tanks. For a country like Israel, that's huge. Of course, yes, that would be huge even for the U.S. Your understanding—the way that Donald Trump can do something without, you know, going too far on the Zionist entity—he can do something about it and keep his position, but putting pressure, just leaving Israel there. You're going to attack Beirut, Iran is going to respond to you. You're going to stay in the southern part of Lebanon, you have to fight it by yourself. What is your understanding of that?

#Anthony

Well, so great points brought up in terms of what do we then do about Israel versus Lebanon. That's been, I think, such an important question from weeks ago that is still yet to be addressed. And here's where I think the truth lies, in terms of the hard truth that must be done, in my opinion, is that the United States must cut ties and make it clear that they are cutting ties in military support to Israel—military, and I mean logistics, I mean supply, I mean reconnaissance, I mean intelligence, I mean fuel—all those things, cutting it completely, and must make it clear. There cannot be any pussyfooting around with this in terms of, well, no, it's got to be made clear and it's got to be made apparent.

And the clear evidence that will come of that, if we're really doing it, is that Israel cannot defeat Hezbollah. Not without the U.S., and here's why: you can't bomb Hezbollah out of existence. And if you want to go in on the ground, they're going to beat you, because unless Israel were to take all of

the IDF out of Gaza, out of the West Bank, out of the Golan Heights, and bring it all to bear to go into Lebanon on the ground, maybe then they could have some level of success on the ground. But even then, it would be incredibly costly, and they would be giving up elsewhere.

It's like the eastern front of the Roman Empire under Romulus Augustus, when we could no longer—the Roman Empire could no longer hold—and were unwilling to give it up. And then around the fringes is where it collapsed, and eventually in the west—excuse me, and eventually in the east. You cannot do that and defeat Hezbollah if you are Israel going in it alone. Israel can't even defeat Hamas. You can't bomb them into non-existence, and if you go in on the ground, you're going to get your butt kicked. And they have, just like in the problem set with the United States and Iran. We cannot bomb Iran into a change. We cannot bomb our way into a negotiation.

We can fire missiles and bombs and warships and tanks and, or excuse me, helicopters and jets all day long. But at some point, you've got to then say, okay, where's the negotiation? And Iran's position has been, no, we're not changing. So if the U.S. really wanted to go in and change Iran, the situation with a military capitulation upon Iran, we would have to go in with everything, and it would be incredibly costly, and it wouldn't guarantee a win. Israel cannot defeat Hezbollah without the United States. So Israel will then have to make the decision: are we going to let go and give up without U.S. support, or are we going to keep at it without U.S. support?

And it's going to get very, very bad, which then again, depending on how committed the United States is to this position and upholding—remember, a deal made doesn't mean it's a deal upheld, right? We can make the deal. But if we go right back into supporting Israel because they're getting slammed by Hezbollah and Hamas, well, then we just, we just, we just—we negged on our deal. Can't do that. So the United States is in a very, very complicated position with our partnership with Israel, especially when it comes to Lebanon and this critical point in this negotiation. And Iran is going to want guarantees. Iran is going to want proof. Iran is going to want, like, we don't trust you.

We want proof. So, I just don't think that the United States is willing to do that at this point. And if they are, we're going to know about it. We're going to find out soon. We'll see if there's news—not that Donald Trump says. If Donald Trump says there's a deal, I don't believe it until Iran comes out officially, the U.S. comes out, until like, if Pakistan and maybe even the Pope say, "Oh, it's real," like everybody has to come out and say it's real before I'll believe it. And even then, I'd like to see, OK, what did either side give up? Because in these previous hundred and four or five days of war, nothing's changed. So if nothing changed, I'm not buying it. If something did change, I don't think Israel gave anything up because we haven't seen that. So did the United States say no more to Israel?

And if that's the case, we're going to have to prove it. And that's, I just feel right. And then again, you know, imagine you have a child and they just don't follow the rules and they're a menace to society. And you say, you're kicked out of the house, and they're underage. So they go out, and they're a minor, and the police are going to come right back and say, you cannot abandon your

minor child. It is your responsibility. We have made Israel into this uncontrollable, vicious minor child who cannot do it on their own. And if we cut them off, well, then the world's going to come back and say, well, United States, you own this. You own this problem. You own this monster you created. And we're going to have to deal with it. I see some decisions coming up that are going to be very hard for this president.

#Nima

You know, we've been witnessing a new sort of ceasefire, as Ambassador Chas Freeman calls it. It's a ceasefire with Israeli characteristics. And maybe they're going to sign an MOU, a memorandum of understanding, with the same sort of—it's going to be a new sort of MOU. They're going to sign it, and they're going to fight, because today, what we've learned is the Israelis are attacking the southern part of Lebanon. They're bombing the southern part of Lebanon and killing people in Gaza the same, in the West Bank the same. As we talk right now, there are commercial vessels trying to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and Iranians are firing at them.

You know, there is no sign of having any sort of—because when you try to make some sort of negotiation or talks, at least we have to see some sort of sign. From looking at all fronts, there is no sign of anything coming up. That's why I think if they assume—let's assume they're going to sign the MOU—we're going to have the same sort of issue we are witnessing right now. The same with Lebanon, the same with Gaza. I don't know what that means anymore. And what is the main objective of negotiations with the Trump administration?

#Anthony

Yeah, and I, you know, memorandums of understanding are the coward's way out of firm negotiation. An IOU. And I don't think Iran's playing anymore with MOUs as the end. There may be MOUs being passed back and forth from the United States to Iran and Iran to the United States. Memorandums of understanding that, in these rounds of negotiations, here are the things we'll consider. But Iran is not going to stand for, nor should they, the result of negotiations being an MOU. While I was up in D.C. this past week, because it's also the 250th anniversary and I had some time, I went to the National Archives.

And when you go to the National Archives, you can see all these historic documents. And one of those is the Japanese surrender. We keep a copy of it in the National Archives. You can go see it. And I'll tell you what, you know what it's not called? It's not called a memorandum of understanding. It's called a formal declaration of surrender. Do you think we would have taken a memorandum of understanding from the Empire of Japan to end World War II? Hey guys, you really laid it on us. A lot to consider here. How about we just stop the war, like stop bombing us, stop with all the Navy stuff. Here's a memorandum of understanding.

We'll come back to it. No, no, neither should Iran. And they won't. So, memorandums of understanding—sounds nice, sounds cushy, sounds like something you could celebrate. It means nothing. It means nothing if there isn't something tangible. It means nothing if behind that agreement you aren't showing action. Don't tell me you're going to do it. Show me. And I think that's where Iran is now with the United States when it comes to their relationship with Israel. Don't tell me you're going to do it. Then we can negotiate. Can Iran survive with sanctions? They sure can. Can Iran survive with their assets frozen? They sure can.

Can Iran survive and still maintain how they have the Strait of Hormuz and not be blown out of existence? They sure can. Can Iran continue to exist and support the axis of resistance with Hezbollah and Hamas and Ansar Allah? They sure can. So what is the United States' leverage? And if that leverage that Iran is dividing—that wedge—is that relationship with the United States and Israel, Iran is not going to take it. We'll get to it. They're going to want proof. Just like we say to Iran, we want proof, Iran is saying the same thing to the United States. Okay, here are our existentials. You want proof of the nuclear?

Come and inspect it. Go ahead. Come and look. We're not giving it up, but inspect all you want. The Strait of Hormuz—the world can see it. We're not going to... That can be hashed out, but we're not leaving. How can Iran leave the Strait of Hormuz? It's their... it's their... it's their territorial... Iran can't leave the Strait. Iran is the Strait of Hormuz. When people keep talking about, well, Iran—who's the Strait of Hormuz? The Strait of Hormuz is literally half Omani, half Iranian. Iran can't leave the Strait of Hormuz. So, these conditions—though some things are fungible—what's not is Iran's position on Lebanon.

And what Iran will not take is, "We'll get to it," or "Here's an MOU." So between two days ago, when it was "We're going to bomb you out of existence, there's no deal," to within a few short hours, "Oh, there's this deal, we're going to have it signed, it's great." What's the day of the week today? Friday. What do we always see on a Friday? So I don't think there's a deal. And if there is, there's going to be some hard evidence to show come tomorrow or Monday or whenever we reveal this deal on what the United States has promised. I can see what Iran has promised. I can see that pretty clearly. I don't see what the United States has promised.