

Iran Issues FINAL WARNING, \$300B Trap Ends Trump | Pape & Henningsen

Professor Robert Pape joins the show for the first time. Prof Robert Pape is a leading global expert on military strategy, international security, and geopolitical conflict. A Professor at the University of Chicago and Director of the Chicago Project on Security and Threats, he has spent over 40 years analyzing how bombing campaigns, air power, and foreign interventions shape international relations. <https://escalationtrap.substack.com/> Prof. Pape's Substack. Patrick Henningsen of 21st Century Wire also comes on to discuss the latest developments regarding Iran's surge to global prominence and the massive \$300 billion dollar defeat facing the Trump administration and US empire. <https://patrickhenningsen.substack.com/> Patrick Henningsen Substack <https://www.youtube.com/@21stCenturyWireTV> Patrick's YouTube 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/spiritofho>

#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's your host, Danny Haiphong. As you can see, I am joined by a new guest, a very special guest. I am very grateful he took the time out of his schedule today, Professor Robert Pape. He is the author and writer of *The Escalation Trap* on Substack, and he is a professor at the University of Chicago and has been talking a lot about the war on Iran. Professor Pape, thanks so much for joining today. Thanks for having me. Of course. So how about we get right into it? There's been a lot of talk about the 14 points in the Memorandum of Understanding. Bloomberg just released them.

Iran says that a lot of these points may be distorted, may not actually be what's in it. There's also talk that this might just be private. There may actually not be a public document released to anybody, and we might be relying on these leaks for quite some time. But there is one part of it I wanted to ask you about, because J.D. Vance just commented on it, and I'll just put up what he said. I want to ask you about the \$300 billion fund. This is subject to a lot of scrutiny now in the mainstream media, and I wanted your thoughts on what J.D. Vance had to say here and what it means for what you've been saying, which was Iran's leverage is only getting stronger. Here we go.

#CBS News

You've seen the details in this memorandum of understanding that still remains secret. But both members, even of your party, are saying, wait, I don't know the details yet, so they're skeptical. So let me ask you this: can you confirm that it is going to end all sanctions against Iran, that it will ensure reconstruction financing of at least \$300 billion for Iran, and that it will release all frozen funds, which could be more than \$100 billion? Given that amount of money flowing into Iran, how does that amount of money flowing into the chief exporter of terror make America safer?

#JD Vance

So none of those things flow to Iran unless Iran fundamentally changes how it behaves with the world. If you look at the Memorandum of Understanding, and again, it's gonna come out either later today or on Friday, what it fundamentally says is Iran can have their economy with fewer sanctions on it, but only if they change the way that they interact with the world. So let me just give you a very concrete example. Let's say the United Arab Emirates — not a single penny of American money will flow to Iran. I want to be clear about that, even if the Iranians do everything that they're supposed to.

If the Emiratis say they want to invest in a power plant in Iran, they actually can't invest in a power plant in Iran so long as Iran is under the current sanctions regime that the United States has. Now, we're not going to lift that sanctions regime unless Iran stops funding terrorism, unless Iran stops trying to rebuild the nuclear program. So what the president is really saying is, if Iran fundamentally transforms how it deals with the United States and the region, the rest of the world, then Iran can get the economic benefit.

#Danny

So, Professor Pape, this is the explanation coming out of the White House. What is the actual explanation, in your estimation, of this \$300 billion reconstruction fund? And what does it say about Iran's actual position? Because J.D. Vance is positioning the United States and the White House as being in the dictator position here.

#Robert Pape

Yeah. So let me just read what is in the MOU so that we can at least talk about the words that are here, because this is what we have to go on. And nothing he—this is really the key. This is point six in the MOU. And by the way, CNN is on this now, you know, putting this out, and so are Saudi media. The United States undertakes, together with its regional partners, to create a comprehensive plan agreed upon by both parties for the rehabilitation and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran, while ensuring financing of at least \$300 billion. The implementation mechanism of this plan, as part of the final agreement, will be formulated within 60 days. So let's just be clear about that.

What Iran is expecting, because this is not, well, this will happen a year from now—what Iran is expecting is there'll be a signing ceremony, and they will immediately begin developing the comprehensive plan for the \$300 billion, which is then going to come into being. And this is going to be something that it says the regional partners, not the United States, will necessarily pay into, but the regional partners will put into. Well, this is important on a number of different levels. It's important, number one, because of the number \$300 billion. This is maybe the reason this MOU is not being circulated. That number is in the MOU, and it's being quite, quite clear.

Number two, simply the idea that the United States is going to work on the plan is already creating momentum for the Gulf states to move in the direction of Iran. Because as every businessperson knows, you've got your antenna up because you want to be in there. You want to be in early as these deals evolve. As things evolve, there will be money. There will be lots of reasons to want to do this. So what this is doing, it's basically pushing open a door that then pushes open more and more in this direction. Now, it is true, as J.D. Vance said, that if America doesn't like whatever comes at the end of the 60 days, that Iran—this can be blunted. However, Iran has its own response to that: shutting down the Strait of Hormuz.

So this is what J.D. Vance, the vice president, is leaving out here. And this gets back to the bigger point I'd like to just explain, which is, in the next 60 days—this is my analysis, and I have a longer analysis on the Escalation Trap Substack explaining this on Monday again today—the leverage for Iran is about to reach its period of maximum leverage. It hasn't reached maximum leverage yet, because over the next 60 days, what's going to happen is there may be dribbles of ships coming out of the Gulf, but in the next 60 days, none of those ships are going to hit the refineries. That oil isn't hitting refineries for 60, 90 days.

So that means that you're going to have to draw down the world's oil inventories to their rock bottoms, as everybody has been explaining. The oil industry experts have been explaining over the next 60 days. You still got to run out. You have a spare gas tank in your car, and you're going to run that down to empty because you don't have anything else to put in your car. You see what I mean? So you're going to run that down. Now, what happens when you get to that 60-day window? Iran's leverage is even greater because now you have a situation where if they disrupt the cutoff of Hormuz again, it has a more abrupt effect because there's no cushion.

You don't have the spare gas tank at all. And the world's oil inventory experts—this includes the International Energy Agency, which has been dead-on about this—say none of those inventories could possibly rise until next year. So this isn't like, oh man, sigh of relief, we're out of the woods. No, we're in the period of Iran's maximum leverage growing. And that's going to continue through early next year, through the midterms next year. And now, does President Trump, in the middle of August, then want to say, oh no, I'm going to go back to bombing?

Well, that's not necessarily a positive thing for the midterms. So what exactly is President Trump going to do here when Iran is expecting some big hunk of that \$300 billion is coming? And then J.D.

Vance, oh no, no, no, we're not good, no, no, we're digging in our heels. Are they really going to dig in their heels or not? This is the escalation trap. This is a trap. This is not out of the trap. J.D. Vance is not getting out of the trap by what he's saying. So it's true, the United States can pull back. But from Iran's perspective, they're welching on the deal. And then that means Hormuz shuts down again.

#Danny

Right. And Iran has been, Professor Pape, warning the United States about the Lebanon situation because Israel continues to attack Lebanon. Israel, multiple officials from Ben-Gvir to Netanyahu himself, have said they will keep bombing Lebanon and keep IDF troops in Lebanon as well, which to Iran is a violation of the MOU. And the MOU quite clearly says Lebanon is part of this understanding. Now, do you see this escalation trap around the Strait of Hormuz as the leverage and the primary weapon that Iran right now wields should this violation, in Iran's eyes, continue? And U. S. intel just put out a report saying that this particular point of leverage is stronger than a nuclear bomb. How do you react? Yes, absolutely, so this is the Hormuz...

#Robert Pape

Bombs were meant to cripple the regime, topple the regime, failed. The regime takes Hormuz. It actually got stronger. It takes Hormuz. And now what you see is Iran is moving from survival to ambition. And it's on a trajectory not just to cut a deal, look at this in the rearview mirror the way President Trump wants to do. It's on a trajectory to gain power. And it's using the negotiations to gain power. It's using the MOU to gain power because the MOU has the clauses which are planting the stakes in the ground, the seeds, if you would, of the future conflict and what will be contentious over the next 60 days. What's going to be contentious is, number one, did Israel withdraw from southern Lebanon? Number two, is Iran going to get its unfrozen assets, which is a completely separate clause, okay, that it's supposed to get during the 60 days, I might add.

Is it going to get that unfrozen set of assets? Number three, is it going to get any of the \$300 billion that it now clearly thinks it's going to get on day 61? That is when that's going to start. And what you have here, and we haven't even talked about, what's supposed to happen is that American forces are also supposed to leave. Now, all of this can be rejected by the United States, but Iran, for any one of these reasons, can shut down the Strait of Hormuz. And you could then, on just this contentious 60 days or thereafter, the war can restart at literally any moment as a result of all these different seeds in which it can come undone. Now, maybe none of these will happen. Maybe Israel will withdraw from southern Lebanon. Maybe the United States is going to give all this money over, the unfrozen assets and so forth. Well, we'll see.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We'll see. And talk about now, if you can, how this changes the world situation, because from the point of view of J.D. Vance, even when he was describing that this is all going to be funded by the GCC and that these countries are going to enter into arrangements with Iran if the U.S. lets them, it almost hints that actually GCC countries really do need or maybe would want Iranian investment or to invest in Iran. It kind of gives a, well, why would the GCC be forced into any kind of \$300 billion arrangement without any U.S. involvement other than the U.S. telling them what to do? It's a bit strange logically. I'm curious if you have any thoughts on this.

#Robert Pape

Yeah, so I've been warning for some time that there's the escalation trap, this modeling that I'm talking about. It says once Iran takes Hormuz, gains power, we're at a fork in the road — either more escalation, or Iran, as we capitulate to this or acquiesce, will be on a trajectory to become more powerful, a regional hegemon, and literally the fourth center of world power underneath the United States, China, and Russia. Right. So I published this in the New York Times in early April. So this is what this MOU is. The MOU is a roadmap to Iran becoming that fourth center of world power, the regional hegemon in the region. Now, not all at once, not overnight, but over a year or two or so.

And this is the roadmap for exactly how that's going to happen. Well, once you see that roadmap, you can understand right away that the Gulf states are kowtowing to Iran's rising power, as it still retains effective control over 20% of the world's oil, because it can shut down Hormuz at literally any moment during this period of time. And that's going to go on for decades, as U.S. intel is now saying, or at least years, as U.S. intel is saying. And then, if that's true, that's why it makes sense for the Gulf states to essentially bandwagon. Why? Because who do they need for their security? America has shown it can't guarantee the Gulf's security.

Who else are they going to get their security from? They've basically got to give protection money to Iran because it's Iran that everybody's looking to. Who are the shippers looking to? How are we going to get this oil out? Who's going to carry the oil? Well, it's going to be shipping companies. Who's going to guarantee the security of those ships? Not America. Those shipping companies have already been saying in the media they're looking to Iran to guarantee their security. That's where the future tolls and so forth, their fees, are going to come from — not because they're looking to America to guarantee their security. So that's what this is. It's a roadmap, this MOU, to Iran's rising power.

That's why the Israelis are apoplectic about this, because before the war, they were the rising power. Now the tables have been turned, and it's Iran rising and Israel the declining power. And Iran is spreading its wings. It's getting that sphere of influence here, and this will probably grow rather substantially over time. But as we go forward, the Israelis aren't going to like this. The Americans are going to come under more and more pressure because they've got to make more and more concessions as this goes on. You're going to find that hurricane season is going to come, so

we're going to find that other things are going to disturb the price of oil. So there's a lot of issues here that are already foreseeable.

And notice, another thing your listeners may not know — we study, political scientists study ceasefires and so forth. There's a great study by the Notre Dame Kroc Institute your folks should go check out, which has analyzed virtually every ceasefire from 1947 to 2016. It's a recent study. Eighty percent of the time, ceasefires break down. When don't they break down? When you've got gigantic third-party forces guaranteeing them. Well, there's nobody who can guarantee this. There's no bigger set. We're talking, this is way too big. So this is already on thin ice just to begin with. And the problem here is Iran's trajectory of power is foreseeably rising, and the details of it can even be seen.

#Danny

And given those problems you just noted, despite, you know, as you indicated earlier, it does seem like the United States and how the Trump administration is framing it — they say that this is a big victory. But really, it's a big defeat that's being acknowledged in the mainstream media. But given all the problems you just noted, do you see this MOU then as a very short-lived historical experience, and one that will lead to a restart of the war? And then how does that fit into this escalation trap that you've talked about? Because it seems like there could be more war on the way. Yeah.

#Robert Pape

So this is what I call the middle game of the escalation trap. And I'll be glad to explain what the end game would look like and how you know you're there. Yeah. What I think when I look at this MOU — and I've studied it now in detail, just for six hours before I put out the thing this morning — it looks to me like this is, again, the roadmap for Iran to become the rising power. And why is Trump— what's it really look like from Trump's perspective? For Trump, it looks like a temporary off-ramp between now and the elections. So the midterms are coming. Trump would like to get things calmed down. He'd like to get the public to focus on something else. He'd like everybody to have the face of this with J.D. Vance.

He basically wants to find a way to get from now to the midterms here without this getting worse and worse and worse. Although Israel, of course, is a thorn in his side, and that's why he's so upset about this with Israel. However, once you get past the midterms here, there's a big problem, which is if Iran has not truly surrendered all of its enriched uranium, what's it doing with that enriched uranium? And are we sure we know what's going on? That's the whole problem we've had since we bombed Fordow. We don't really know what's going on with that enriched uranium, not for sure. We think we do, we have satellites telling us, but we don't have those on-the-ground inspectors the way we did before.

So now this is going to be the problem for Trump going forward, because as Iran continues, there is a huge incentive for Iran to have nuclear weapons. And Ratcliffe is the CIA director. We have

another leak coming out that he just showed all the eavesdropping we've been doing on the Iranian military, the senior leaders there, and they're planning on taking advantage of the MOU and then just doing whatever they want. They want to get all the money they can get, basically a big squeeze here. What can they squeeze out of America in terms of dollars? And then they're just going to go about their merry way and do whatever they're going to do. Well, part of that could well be nuclear weapons.

#Danny

Oh, I think you're muted there. Oh, yeah, sorry about that. Well, in many respects, from Iran's perspective, it would be that, and they've made it quite clear that their self-defense, or their defense, is not really negotiable. And so I guess I'm wondering, you know, this was a very curious time for the United States to enter into such a major war, and now it's lasted months and months and months. And from Iran's perspective, everything you just said would be reasonable, given that they've been attacked twice in the last year alone. So how much is it that the U.S.—you know, they talk a lot about Iran won't change its behavior, won't change its behavior, they need to change their behavior—but how much of this falls on the U.S., the Trump administration's behavior, to change in order for any of these problems involved in this trap to be avoided or resolved?

#Robert Pape

Well, the way you'd know you're at an endgame of this round of the escalation trap wouldn't be a permanent endgame, but the way you'd know you're at the endgame is when America pulls out all of the additional forces it's moved in since the first of the year. So we know, and we've tracked, and this is one of the reasons I worried the war was going to start in the first place. That's what led me to start this thing called the Escalation Trap Substack in February, days before the war started, because we saw this coming. So that giant military buildup—all those naval forces, all the military aircraft, the tankers, all of that—if you unwind that and you go back to the December 2023–2024 posture, now you could say you're really at the endgame, where it would take months to reconfigure this. And that would be true.

So then you would know you were. But from Iran's perspective, it would only be months to reconfigure it. It only took less than two months, about six weeks, to go from January 15th to February 28th when that bombing started. And then that was a much bigger campaign than just a few days. So you have a situation where Iran's incentives for nuclear weapons are not going to go down over the next year or two. They're going to continue to be at a fever, a very high rate. And the reason is because America is going to—even if it pulls out the forces I just explained, even if it shuts down all 13 of its military bases—Iran is not going to be confident that they won't come back. And this would be like, should America give up its nuclear weapons? Should China give up its nuclear weapons?

Should Russia give up its—should Israel give up its nuclear weapons? Well, the answer, of course, is no for any of those states. So why exactly is Iran not going down this road when the states who did go down that road—Ukraine, Libya—look what happened to them. And look what happened to Iran when it doesn't have nuclear weapons. So how are you going to say to Iran, don't get nuclear weapons because we might kill your supreme leader? What exactly is the leverage here? You see what I mean? And I think this is just what every realist is saying. I'm not unique in this. There's any realist worth their salt. This is realism 101. You've just been through these wars with the United States and Israel. And what exactly are you going to do, depend on them? You're going to depend on a piece of paper and a pinky promise from Netanyahu? I mean, seriously?

#Danny

Yeah, well, Donald Trump is already throwing cold water on the legally binding character of this MOU itself.

#Patrick Henningsen

No, there's nothing legally binding.

#Danny

Gee, that's a shocker. I know. We could just bomb, bomb, bomb away.

#Robert Pape

Yeah, he's been such a dedicated internationalist. I'm so surprised. I'm sorry, it's just we have to have a little humor to allow. It's just been so tense here. And I'm sorry to say that that's why we want to have a celebration. We want the relief to come. We want this. And the truth is, I was happy to have the moments when this could possibly—I'm happy. I'm not wanting this because I'm an American. We're the ones. I pay the same prices as everybody else.

#Danny

Right. Well, maybe in the last five minutes or so we have here, we could end on Israel. What is your belief about the centrality of Israel when it comes to undermining even just this memorandum of understanding? And why do you believe, in this framework that you've outlined, the United States doesn't—Donald Trump, the administration doesn't—try harder to rein in Israel? And all we've gotten are leaked, paraphrased transcripts of what he's yelled at Netanyahu over the phone. It doesn't seem like it's changing Israel's behavior, though. What are your thoughts on this? And is it intentional? Is it that they can't do any—what's your, what's your...

#Robert Pape

Well, my thoughts are, Israel is a spoiler of the first order for any reasonable policy for the United States in the Middle East. But Israel alone is not why the United States has been in the Middle East. Starting in the 1970s—we have to roll back to the 1970s—the United States effectively took over the mission from Britain to guarantee the flow of oil through the Persian Gulf. And that also meant then to prevent an oil hegemon from arising in the Gulf. There are four puddles of oil in the Gulf: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. And they're all within about a 150-mile radius, at least 90% of them. So establishing a true oil hegemony has always been a real issue.

We worried about even the Soviet Union in the Cold War here. And why would you worry about that? It's because the United States economy can get hurt pretty badly with one country with its fingers on Hormuz, for example. Well, now that's happened. So the problem here is that Israel didn't make it any better for us to cut a reasonable security arrangement with Iran. In fact, it went the other way around because Israel wanted hegemony. It wasn't satisfied just where it was, say, 10 years ago or 15 years ago. It wants to be the dominant power in the Middle East. And the problem here is that what that's done is it's upset any reasonable set of arrangements that the United States and Iran could come to.

And this is why we're at where we are today. Now, along the way, there are very specific things Israel has done. They've killed negotiators. They've done that twice, not just once. They've also, I mean, they've attacked during the actual period of negotiation. It was Israel who killed the Supreme Leader, not American bombs here. So it's not just the generalities, but the details follow exactly what I'm saying. And I won't be surprised if it's Israel who upsets the apple cart of this MOU. I mean, you know, just how secure do those Iranian officials feel going to Switzerland?

Are they really going to be okay in those hotel rooms? Really? Really? Are they going to be okay? I mean, this would be quite a thing. You're telling your family, oh, sure, I'm going to go. But think about this. Israel is the number one assassination kingpin on the planet. You know, they don't need to have their fingerprints on what happens. They can go try to blame the Kurds or a whole lot of other folks. So I'm not telling you I can predict that. But what I can say is that if I was heading to Switzerland here, I'd definitely be making sure that I had seen everybody and talked to everybody.

#Danny

Yeah. Yeah, no doubt. This definitely is really until Mossad operatives in Switzerland. That's almost a guarantee. So it is a risk. And I think that's a good place, Professor Pape, to let you go. I know you have a very busy schedule. I want to make sure people know that your Substack, The Escalation Trap, is in the video description. We have another half hour here. But Professor Pape, any last words before I let you go?

#Robert Pape

I just really appreciate this. And one of the reasons I have so much confidence is what I can really see with the way that the internet is evolving is we can just have much, much, much more substantive discussions here. This is not just X, and it's not just the podcast. There's a whole world that's still expanding, and that is really going to work to our advantage over time because we have not been able to have a substantive, informed conversation here. I think of this as changing from the 90s, so it's been a long time before I've seen anything like this truly happening. And I just think this is going to give us reason for optimism. It won't make it easy, but we will navigate these waters better.

#Danny

Thanks so much, Professor Pape. I'll be in touch. Hope to have you back again. Take care.

#Robert Pape

Okay, glad to do it. Thanks for having me. All right, bye-bye.

#Danny

All right, everybody, we still have more show to come, so please do hit the like button. That was Professor Robert Pape, first time on the show, and it was a great segment. Now we have our next guest, who's a returning guest. He's a friend of the show. It is Patrick Henningsen from 21st Century Wire. Patrick, good to see you again, my friend. How are you?

#Patrick Henningsen

Very good. Thank you, Danny. Good to be with you.

#Danny

Of course. Good to be with you. Well, Patrick, how about we begin with Donald Trump at the G7? All the talk is on the memorandum of understanding, the U.S.-Iran so-called deal. Everyone is talking about this massive \$300 billion promise, which the U.S. is walking back after all of these leaks. I just want to play you how Donald Trump behaved with Mr. Sisi, President Sisi of Egypt, at the G7—what he said about the validity of this memorandum he has been touting.

#Donald Trump

It's a memorandum of understanding, and if I don't like it, I'm going to go back to shooting at them, dropping it on their head. If I don't like it, if they don't behave, we'll go right back to dropping bombs right smack in the middle of their head, okay? Because they misbehaved for 47 years. All right. But nobody could have made this deal. I mean, the JCPOA done by Obama, he handed them a

billion seven in cash, gave them hundreds of millions of dollars, gave them billions and billions of dollars. But he gave them 1.7 billion dollars in cash, green cash from banks into a Boeing 757 and flew it into Iran. And they stood at the plane. I have pictures of it, like, oh my, look at this money he's giving us. He tried to bribe his way out. I didn't do that. Nobody mentions that. 1.7 billion and hundreds of millions of dollars. They tried to bribe their way out of it. And you know what the Iranians did? They laughed at Obama and they said he's a stupid son of a bitch.

#Danny

So this was Donald Trump at the G7 essentially throwing a lot of hot water on the deal that he himself has been touting. And now the reports are that \$100 billion of this \$300 billion reconstruction fund has already basically been, you know, in the works and implemented. And Iran, there is some evidence that Iran has been working pretty closely with some of these GCC countries and getting some major projects going. Patrick, your thoughts on all of this?

#Patrick Henningsen

Danny, and I'm quite frankly shocked, but it really goes to show that, you know, here Trump is actually at his kind of potential peak in shedding some of his old baggage, possibly charting a fresh path forward positively. He put aside the Laura Loomers and the Mark Levins, and everybody's sniping at him, claiming that, and the Israelis saying, oh, he's thrown us under the bus. And there you see, that's the true Trump. I think there's a mental defect with this person. He's got a mental issue where he has to basically self-sabotage. He can't take the high road. He can't take the good road for the general welfare. He's not capable of it. And so he's just gone back to square one there.

So you can see he really is not interested in peace. He said, well, we're just going to drop bombs straight on their heads if they don't behave. And they're talking like you're dealing with schoolchildren. And, you know, that's the true Trump right there. He hasn't abandoned the policy yet. He hasn't abandoned the hate for the Iranians, the disdain for Iranians and Arabs. And regime change is still a policy. The United States has not repudiated its stated regime change policy. Neither has Israel. So that's still on the table. Let's not forget that. Until they come out and disavow that, it's still on the table. But he said something there that is just patently false.

And it's a lie that you hear a lot on right-wing talk radio. You hear it on Fox, which is that Iran sent pallets of cash—sorry, the U.S. sent pallets of cash. Obama sent pallets of cash to the Iranians. They bribed them. No. \$1.7 billion in cash was sent to Tehran. And why? That was Iranian money that was frozen. It was part of the terms of the JCPOA that the U.S. government organized and agreed to, as well as six other countries, or five other countries. And the reason they didn't wire the money is because all the banks, because of sanctions—there were still sanctions in place—and the United States couldn't wire the money because the sanctions hadn't been repealed.

So they had to send it in cash. Perfectly explainable and not like some kind of secret bribe or anything like that. I mean, it's just, Danny, I could use a lot of words right now to describe this person, this president, but he just makes things up. He really doesn't know what he's talking about. He's supposedly the most powerful man in the world, or the leader of the free world. He is one of the most uninformed, just unremarkable intellects of any world leader in history. It's mind-blowing. And that's to say nothing about some of the other things he said. I saw other outtakes from this sort of side discussion.

And also it shows you his staff have no control over him. This isn't like a throwaway press opportunity in Washington where you can just say anything and nobody cares if it's true or not. That's America. But this is on the international stage. This is at the G7. And some of the things he's saying, I mean, is it better if he just shut his mouth? You don't have to do those types of media opportunities. But he doesn't know what he's talking about. And neither does J.D. Vance, by the way. J.D. Vance has said some crazy things in the last couple of days. He keeps banging on about the Gulf Cooperation Council in multiple interviews. I think he means the GCC.

#Danny

Yes.

#Patrick Henningsen

But to me, the Gulf Coast is the Gulf of Mexico. I'm thinking Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, maybe. Let's throw Belize in there with Honduras and whatnot, or Costa Rica. I mean, to me, that's the Gulf Coast. So this is the vice president, I mean, and repeating it all day on all these media things. So the people managing Vance don't know what he's saying either. So this is like just a gaggle of charlatans in the White House. That's why they're messing up so badly and they continue to fail. They just, they were—it's one of the reasons, I don't want to sound too black-pilled on this, but I have really low confidence that this administration and the people in it can take the ball over the goal line. On anything. On anything. That's why I never got excited about this MOU. It's a memorandum of understanding.

Are you kidding me? Is it even worth the paper it's written on? I mean, Iran has to play the hand, certainly, and the U.S. has to play the hand as well. And that's also part of the story. They don't have a whole lot of options. The United States doesn't have a whole lot of options either. But there's lots of opportunities to sabotage Iran, this negotiation process going forward. There's just, there's so many checkpoints running into the future month by month that, you know, Israel's just basically sitting back, taking a look at this. They've got their guys around the table that's like, yeah, we can get them to there, and then we'll head them off there, we'll do this. And it's fish in a barrel for Israel. It's so easy to upend this at any time. I mean, so, and that's what Israel's very adept at.

#Danny

People tend to forget history very quickly, but this memorandum of understanding has been literally batted around since I remember making a video on it in late May. So we're nearly a month into even just this concept being thrown around. And then, of course, we have those weeks of escalation where it looked like, well, yeah, exactly as you said, Patrick, the United States can't take anything over the goal line unless it's trying to drop bombs. And then here we are. And now you have Israel, and it seems like the big sticking point that's going to actually derail even just a breather.

And I think, I do believe that the United States wishes it could get a breather, or wants a breather, even the Trump administration, from war with Iran. It seems like Israel is ready to continue bombing Lebanon. They're doing it as we speak. They're continuing to, quote-unquote, fight, which really is just killing civilians. And Iran has said that there is no deal, that not even the MOU is relevant if this doesn't stop, and that there could be a harsh response coming. Iran may have to just strike Israel. What do you think of the overall situation? I mean, this has been developing for the last week plus since the last time we spoke. So give me your thoughts on this overall scenario here.

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, if the U.S. and Israel abide by the terms, then Iran wins. If the U.S. or Israel break the terms and Iran retaliates, then Iran wins. So the only scenario where Iran doesn't win is if the U.S. and Israel break the terms and Iran does not retaliate. But what Iran can do also is extract concessions from the U.S., almost like kind of blood money for everything that Israel does to violate the terms. And by doing that, they can accumulate resources, capital, extract concessions from the U.S. in order to strengthen itself so that it can, at some point—you know, it's building up credits, basically. And then whenever it wants, it can just hammer Israel.

And they've done that already, actually. They did that, you know, two weeks ago. And that's what started this latest round. But the whole point of all that, Danny, is that Iran is 100% in control of escalation, and they are in control of the pace of events, and they can control reactions and so forth. So that's a very strong position to be in. And, you know, the amazing thing about that is there's no way on earth Iran could possibly match the United States and Israel combined in terms of conventional military might, you know. They don't have an air force like Turkey, or the size of an army like Turkey or Israel, for that matter, or the United States of America.

But somehow they've managed to use the tools that they have in such a way, and the leverage that they have—not just the Strait of Hormuz, it's big leverage—and then not just the GCC countries that are allied to the United States. They've used them as leverage as well. So, global economy, energy flow as well. But they've also managed to leverage Lebanon, and maybe not so much in this particular context, leveraging Gaza, but it's still very much there. And that, to me, is incredible.

That's the pressure they put by including Lebanon in this deal. It's caused tension between the U.S. and Israel. That's half the job done. And then they can sit back, and they then are able to modulate the pressure, you see.

And so Iran can control pressure valves, which is extraordinary for somebody that doesn't have these massive conventional militaries that these other countries have. And that's to say nothing, Danny, because the diplomatic assistance and support is increasing, not just for Iran or, say, those sympathetic to the Iranian position, but because if they're steadfast on the principles of, namely, the Lebanon issue, then that creates pressure coming from other countries in the world blaming Israel—blaming Israel for holding up stability and peace. And then that's where the sanctions come. That's when you start seeing European countries, the EU—and it's happening already this week—you see the filing of various sanctions actions against Israel.

There are two or three already in Europe, new ones in Europe this week. And I predict the longer this problem of Israel continues—interrupting, undermining, subverting this peace process—then you're going to see more and more and more sanctions. It's a shame it's happened so slowly, and it's a shame that people haven't got off their you-know-whats to make it happen quicker and to recognize the fact that, you know, to try to avoid getting us to this position in the first place. But it's happening. But this also means that Israel is going to be in a very desperate position. And this is a cornered rat, basically. And a cornered animal, when they're in desperate straits, they do extreme things. And I would not put it past Israel. So you have two things on the menu, and they've done this before.

One is a false flag attack—attacking a U.S. asset, personnel, ship, something or other, who knows. That's one of them. The other one is assassinating some kind of sectarian leader in Lebanon, perhaps a politician. And Israel is planning this as we speak. I would have 100% confidence that this is on the menu. So this brings us back to the 80s—you know, the 80s and the 90s, the 70s—where this type of move was commonplace in order to derail or to redirect the direction of tension or the conflict. There are a lot of questions around the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, which the West always blamed on Syria. But the evidence, when you really look at that case, it looks very clear that it was not—Syria did not assassinate Rafiq Hariri. Who benefited from that?

A lot of the fingers point logically at Israel, possibly the U.S., or a combination of both. But that was a type of game-changing event that changed the course of, you know, the situation there for a period of time anyway. But it really—it was very—it divided Lebanon, just as it was healing from this long civil war. That event basically reignited the sectarian divisions within Lebanon in certain ways, especially between Sunnis—pro-Saudi and pro-American Sunnis—and Shiites, and a lot of hate for Syria. And that really, I think, made a fertile ground for the regime change dirty war against Syria in 2011. All these things are very well calculated. And so I fear, Danny, that we're going to see something along those lines.

I just cannot see from the current Israeli policy and position, and the current support it has from the U.S., that it's going to be able to achieve its goals with Iran just breathing over them on this—that it would require some other support side or tiebreaker, if you will, to create chaos and more confusion. Now, Trump said in one of those sit-downs, Danny, that, well, you know, Hezbollah, they've been fighting. Honestly, I can't stand when Trump talks about Hezbollah and Israel like it's a separate fight over here and the U.S. has nothing to do with it. The U.S. is central to that fight.

The U.S.—the reason Hezbollah is fighting Israel is because the United States government dictates that the Lebanese armed forces cannot have any aircraft, air defense, or any real weapons, because the Israeli lobby pressures the U.S. government to enact that policy on Lebanon so that the influence comes from Israel to Washington and then back to Beirut. And because of that, there's nobody that can guard the southern border. There's nobody that can protect those southern towns and cities except Hezbollah. So that's why they exist. The United States guarantees that Hezbollah exists. That's the whole point. This is way over Trump's head, by the way. And then he says, you know, Israel shouldn't be fighting them, and maybe we'll get Syria to come in. Al-Qaeda can do it. They'll do a much better job, quite frankly.

Imagine that. So Trump's basically saying we would like to see a bloody civil war in Lebanon, because that's exactly what that would mean. I don't know if that's practical with all these—I mean, some of Jolani's crew are the biggest bunch of just fumbling thugs you can imagine. You know, it's Toyota pickups, firing guns in the air, you know, doing pogroms. That's all well and good in a collapsed, failed state of Syria. They're not going to get away with that. But if the U.S. did push that, that means that Syria would then, or what we call Syria, which is an al-Qaeda regime, they would become a proxy of the U.S. and Israel, because ultimately that's who's going to arm them, fund them, control them. It's going to be Israeli intelligence, and it's going to be the U.S. Turkey will not be involved, I predict, in that at all.

While the Turkish intelligence and the MIT have played a central role in supporting Jolani in Idlib and preparing him to take Damascus, all sorts of support on every conceivable level—that's not there anymore, because you're talking about Israel now, and Turkey cannot get its hands dirty that close to occupied Palestine for many good reasons. So Syria would become a proxy. That's why it seems remote and it seems outlandish, but if they chose to do that, that would be a U.S.-Israeli proxy operating in Lebanon to sow chaos, division, and also to pull Hezbollah's resources away from opposing Israeli invasion and occupation. So where Syria would enter would be something that would benefit Israel in terms of what objectives it wanted to achieve on the ground in the south and up to and past the Litani River, quite frankly.

#Danny

Yeah, the thought of these bandits that the U.S. and so many other vassal states and Israel were supporting, to take over this kind of operation, I mean, it almost feels like gaslighting, because to

believe that an unstable regime that, as you said, is just made up of some of the most listless thugs can exist, take over this operation, and Israel be able to just sit back and say, yeah, that's great, we can stop our crusade against Hezbollah and the Lebanese people and our genocidal crusade against them, and allow Jolani, who they also state they don't like either, would be a very difficult pill to swallow.

#Patrick Henningsen

They say they don't like him, Danny, but he's partnering with Israel to allow Israel to occupy the Golan Heights and Mount Hermon and Quneitra. Or no, well, yeah, those sort of areas. But the point is, if they pulled that trigger, that wouldn't just be Jolani thugs. It would open the door for a jihadi waterfall coming from Central Asia. You'd have Uyghurs in there, Uzbeks, the worst of the worst. They'd be coming as far as Indonesia because that's what happened in Syria. It was a free-for-all, basically. Anybody with a beard showed up with a gun and a handful of Captagon pills and could fight around the clock 24/7. That's the reality of the Syrian dirty war. So that's what you would get. It would be an absolute bloodbath in Lebanon. I still don't think it would be easy for them.

They might be able to invade and occupy the Bekaa Valley, parts of the Bekaa Valley, and certainly they would move north to Tripoli because that's where the sympathetic, sort of more Salafist elements of the Sunni population, sympathizers of Jolani, are. And that's a big risk. But I think for that, the Lebanese Armed Forces would be more active in the north, so that would create some kind of potential obstacle for an invading al-Qaeda army. But in terms of the south and disarming Hezbollah, I don't think so. I really don't think so. They might try a few things. There might be some skirmishes, I'm sure. But in terms of a full-on operation like that, unless it's coordinated with Israel, now that's problematic. Right, that's problematic — Israel acting as the air force to al-Qaeda, which they've done already in the Syrian war. So, I mean, that's a pretty daunting scenario there, actually.

#Danny

It is. It is. I guess in my mind, it's like 2026 is far different than 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014. The optics are really difficult to evade now that, of course, the U.S. and Israel have essentially created a pretty historic, major shift in optics — the geopolitical, political, economic, and of course military, you know, military development in this region. It would be difficult, but it is something that I think, you know, Trump is like the id — he can't control it. It's like these impulses that can't be arrested when he talks. But you know that when he says something, it exists within the minds not just of Donald Trump, but of course the rest of the warmongers, the neocons, and the elites.

#Patrick Henningsen

The last thing, Danny, is that what's dangerous is if Trump is at a weak ebb politically in America. Because if he's at a weak ebb in America, he then becomes much more vulnerable to the deep state extremist neocon elements, like in his first term. So suddenly the John Boltions of the world and this

type of ilk, and all the dirty war architects, they then become more prominent and become active in operations in the administration, influencing what policies the U.S. is going to pursue and back. And that's very, very dangerous. A weak Trump — which it's inevitable he is, and he will continue to be — and that's something that certainly I'd be very concerned about when we're talking about these dirty war scenarios, covert actions, all this other stuff.

#Danny

Totally. And perhaps let's look at this, as I wanted to bring up — you know, oftentimes it feels like the United States under Trump, or really any administration, there's always different, various forms of this. But I think under Trump it tends to be very much in your face how much gaslighting ends up happening each and every single day about various developments that the United States finds itself entangled in, especially a war. I wanted to play you this — he talks about what the potential economic consequences of continuing war with Iran would be without this memorandum of understanding coming into play here. And I want your reaction to it.

#Donald Trump

It's in the low 70s, man. That's amazing. So that's what speaks louder than words. The alternative would be a worldwide depression. You know, the stupid people want to have a worldwide depression. And the stupid people... So you can only go so far. Drive somebody into the ground and a lot of bad things happen. Number one, the Strait would never open because they don't like floating billion-dollar ships up and down a strait when there are rockets flying over them and mines all over the place. So the Strait would never be open. It wouldn't be open for a long time. So we have a very hot stock market, and we have a very—starting to be a very low oil price. And I guess it's in the low 70s.

#Danny

So, yeah, the beginning there, everyone, if you didn't know, he was referencing oil prices. Patrick, your thoughts? I mean, he's literally saying there would have been a worldwide depression happening very soon if the war continued — a war he and his administration and all those backing it, including Israel, wanted so badly and started. And now he is taking credit for being the smart guy and the stupid people wanting to continue the war. Who are these stupid people, Patrick, and your thoughts just generally on this?

#Patrick Henningsen

The stupidest person we just watched sit in that chair right there and try to push that one uphill. It's pretty hopeless. Trump is a tragic person. He's so weak and deflated. You can see, you know, again, I question his advisors allowing him to show himself like that. I mean, you know, he looks like an ogre, all hunched back as he's getting off the plane and everything. He's very overweight right now.

He's very heavy. And he looks horrible, sounds horrible. And then he's just—besides that, he just keeps spewing out the same madness, just ridiculous. For the United States, it's a real humiliation to have a president like this and then parade him around the world stage.

I mean, it's doing America no favors, and I think Trump's legacy is shot to bits. I don't think he can recover. I don't think he has the ability to recover because he lacks the ability to self-examine and be self-aware. I really think—I'm not sounding flippant or, you know, pretending to be a sort of armchair shrink—but there's a mental defect there. And maybe this is his way of showing he can't handle the pressure, that he's just short-circuiting all the time. But I don't think he really understands what he's doing. He doesn't understand what's happened.

He has no way of putting it into the context of a worldview or of history. You're really dealing with somebody there that's just really out of his depth. As President of the United States, Donald Trump is so far out of his depth. As a street hustler and, uh, you know, licensing his image on steaks and, uh, golf tournaments and, uh, you know, Miss World pageants, it's really showing. He is really showing that, uh, you know, gladiator fights on the White House lawn with Evel Knievel motorcycles that are doing flips overhead. So what, what is the—I'm waiting for, you know, it's like Idiocracy, you know, where's Terry Crews when you need him?

#Danny

Yeah, well, uh, I guess that gets into maybe the final point we can hit on here, is what is the—you know, because Trump seems to be referring to Democrats, and Democrats have not been any stranger to wanting war with Iran, but it's always been a kind of particular war because Democratic Party regimes have usually been tied up in other parts of the world or other conflicts in the same region where they can't really pursue it. And of course, they are taking credit now for being the political force that doesn't have decision-making capacity in the way that Trump does. So they're saying, "Trump lost, Trump lost, Trump lost." But none of them are really, at this point, championing that the war should continue, because that would be political suicide.

So it's still—I'm still curious who these stupid people are who wanted the war to continue. Most outside of the Trump administration and Israel, Iran are either silent on this or would say maybe we should do something different, even if it's not peace. I don't think I've ever heard anything out of the establishment on any political side of the aisle saying we need peace with Iran or we need peace in general. But there isn't a lot of enthusiasm about continuing. So why then is Trump lashing out? It seems like a phantom "stupid people" here, unless he is telling us something we don't know. What's he indicating or hinting at—people we just don't know who they are?

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, I mean, there's a few genuine dissidents in Congress and the Senate that are resolutely anti-war. Everyone else is really wishy-washy. They'll just go whichever way Israel tells them to go. They

each have an AIPAC handler, so they'll tell them what to say and do. But if you really step back and look at that clip you played of Trump, where he's talking about, "We're going to go bomb them if they're not behaving," essentially what you see there is he hasn't changed his position at all this whole time. This is just a little break. His attitude is like, if they don't abide by our maximalist demands— you know, Trump has already gone 90 percent on previous negotiations and then inserted some new points in there that have caused the negotiations to hit the wall and then go back to zero again.

So he's also famous for this, and he will do this. And this could be a problem. He likes moving the goalposts and putting new terms in, and then that brings the whole process back to the starting point again. So he has proven he has a track record for that. And his attitude has not changed. He's disrespectful. He doesn't regard human life in Iran as worth anything, although they wax lyrical about the poor people of Iran deserving freedom and we're here to free them, and we're bombing them, but it's because we love them and we want to put pressure on the regime. The same old sort of nonsensical lines you get from the United States.

Again, AIPAC talking points fed into U.S. politicians. So, Danny, I think I'm not convinced that this is any— I thought if this is a change to Trump, maybe there's a chance for some progress. But I do not see a different Trump. I see the same ignorant, ill-informed, and slightly mentally, you know, like not quite all-there Trump. And it makes me really concerned that little things could throw this into disarray at any point in the next 24 months. So again, if I had to bet money on this, you know, going to plan or not, I think you can figure out where I'm going to wager.

#Danny

24 months. That's a long time. I can't imagine. I mean, sometimes we have like 24 hours, but do we have 24 days before this so-called deal just goes up in smoke? Because in large part, I mean, in large part, it's the U.S.'s plausible deniability, Israel doing what it wants, whenever it wants. And that's causing Iran—you know, this Lebanon situation feels very serious. It doesn't get the kind of attention maybe it deserves, but it is a very serious issue for Iran. And it doesn't seem like this deal will hold up at all unless there really is a cessation of hostilities there.

#Patrick Henningsen

One point, one last point. People just need to understand. Israel—I mean, imagine Netanyahu and the Israelis listening to Trump in those clips. They're laughing at him. They're a hundred times smarter than he is. So they're playing 5D chess. Trump is playing, I don't know what, you know, checkers or Connect Four. I think Connect Four is probably a better one. Because what happened this week, Danny? People who were paying attention—Trump was desperate to announce his deal, his victory, his win at his 80th birthday party, at the cage match on the White House lawn, and then

to go to the G7, first to Paris and then to Geneva, and to arrive as a winner with a deal in hand. Israel knew this. That's why they struck Lebanon. That's why they hit the Hezbollah command. That's why they attacked Beirut.

Because they knew this is the one time they could do it without an Iranian retaliation. Because they knew that Trump would do anything possible to prevent Iran from retaliating because it would throw his win into disarray. This was—I'm 100 percent certain that Israel did that intentionally because they had objectives they wanted to do, but they didn't want to pay the price of an Iranian retaliation. That's how far ahead Israel is and how easily they can play Trump, and how weak. Trump is a weak leader. As a politician, he is so weak. Biden was, you know, if you had to compare the two in terms of their sort of stubbornness on certain political issues, Biden was much more firm on some fundamental issues, and Trump is extremely weak. He just folds with a little bit of pressure from Lindsey Graham or from Fox or who knows.

He's extremely weak. This is probably the strongest front he's ever—this MOU is like his Alamo. But he'll fold by the end of the week with enough pressure. The Israelis are playing the U.S. like an absolute fiddle. They've been doing it and they can continue. They've been playing us, Danny, like a fiddle for 40 years, 50 years. Oslo peace process, case in point. So that's what you're up against. And if you don't have smart people that are independent and believe in U.S. sovereignty in the White House, then you really don't stand a chance against the Israelis. They can mobilize so many different ways to head you off. And you really need—I don't think they have the personnel, or the people aren't independent enough to deal with that. So I don't know. Trump's got his work cut out for him.

#Danny

Yeah, well, this is what Israel focuses on. I mean, a lot of people have this thing about, okay, some people have even said Israel is going to be this grand power. I don't think so, actually, because Israel focuses a lot on this kind of thing, which keeps them, yes, very destructive, very genocidal, very, I guess you could say, effective at killing. But they spend so much on moving political weight—so much time, effort, resources on moving political weight, especially on the U.S. side. It kind of only can get you so far, but it gets very far. It gets much farther when, yes, Donald Trump, his people, they don't have that kind of skill.

They're not—I mean, this was the whole thing from Trump as a historical phenomenon from the very beginning, right? A lot of actual U.S. leaders, they have very close relationships and, or maybe have even some—I think Obama had some intelligence training, to be honest. I think literal training in how to behave and how to operate and how to be a real snake, not just a pretend one. And that's where I think Trump is having big, big, big problems, especially with Israel. I think that's why he actually—I think he has gotten a little angry at times, but it doesn't change the calculus at all. So, Patrick, any final thoughts as we head out of here? And then I'll end with the announcements and things like that.

#Patrick Henningsen

No, I think, well, I think we've covered a fair bit there, but final summation: the United States just accepted terms of surrender, so it's pretty clear. And Iran is in a position to enforce those, and the U. S. is not, without going back to square one and all the pain and turmoil that comes with that. So it's a massive win for Iran. It's unbelievable.

It's like a middleweight coming into the ring with a super heavyweight and coming out on a decision—a 10-round decision or even a TKO. It's unbelievable geopolitically. So it's elevated Iran to a regional superpower and then globally to, I would say, a lower-tier superpower. But they're on the superpower level globally—not the upper echelon, perhaps. But regionally, I don't see anyone else in the region that has the clout and the credibility and the street cred. The street cred—where's the Arab street? Unbelievably, they're behind Iran on this. So that's a big game changer.

#Danny

The Arab street, unfortunately, those governments—those who call them governments—they have no sovereignty. And then, of course, there are some who like to fan Israel's flames, but the credibility side of this, global credibility, zero. I mean, the way that the world views Israel is not as a regional hegemon, but as, as some—Robert Pape called them a spoiler. We can call them a lot meaner things than that when it comes to how they like to get things done. So, yeah, no, it's just Iran sitting there now with bigger, you know, just so much more credibility now, more power, more ability to throw weight around, and of course to defend sovereignty, which I think is really the name of the game anyway for Iran, and to be able to project any kind of deterrence for that. But Patrick, I want to make sure everyone knows that your Substack is in the video description and your YouTube channel, 21st Century Wire, is in the video description.

Everyone, go to both of those, support Patrick, subscribe to his YouTube. Everyone, thanks for giving Super Chat. Thanks. I pulled you guys up, thanks so much for that. Moderators, of course, as always, thanks for your help. Everyone who viewed today, of course, thank you. And hit the like button—that helps boost the show after we are done. Tomorrow, I'll be on with Larry Johnson, 2 p. m. Eastern time, I think June 18th. So be sure to tune in to that. Until next time, Patrick, anything you want to say as we head out of here?

#Patrick Henningsen

No, thank you. It's great to be with you, Danny.

#Danny

All right, well, we'll head out together. All right, everyone, bye-bye. Hit that like button, and see you again tomorrow.

