

Iran's Drones STRIKE Cargo Ship in Hormuz, Trump in DENIAL | Henningsen

Patrick Henningsen of 21st Century joins the show to discuss escalation in the Strait of Hormuz as Iranian drones surprise Trump and burst asunder the myth that the US is in control.

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#Danny

This is Danny Haiphong, and these are the latest developments that have occurred over the last 24 hours. A Singaporean-flagged vessel in the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an Iranian drone in the last 24 hours on June 25th. The Wall Street Journal reports that this puts the U.S.-Iran MOU on very shaky grounds, and Donald Trump himself had an incredibly tepid answer for this, saying that this is obviously a violation of the ceasefire. As you can see here, Donald Trump also mentioned that there was more than one drone that attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz in the last 24 hours.

Al Jazeera confirms that Iran, after warning these vessels—three of them—that they needed to turn around, did indeed fire one-way drones their way. Also occurring now, the Wall Street Journal reports that the United States is about to change its force posture in the Middle East. This comes as Bahrain's Fifth Fleet, the U.S. Naval Fifth Fleet, has about \$400 million worth of damage. Saudi bases, Kuwaiti bases—all may be closed, and some military installations will go underground. To discuss all of this and more, I have with me Patrick Henningsen of 21st Century Wire.

Patrick, thanks so much for joining me again. It's always great to have you here. Great to be with you, Danny. Everyone, hit the like button — that helps boost the show. So, how about we get into that first story, Patrick — your reaction to this story that Iranian drones were firing at ships in the Strait of Hormuz. Again, this comes after we covered yesterday that the IRGC has been warning vessels they need to take the prescribed route that Iran has drawn, and some of them are not doing so. What's going on here, and how significant is this? Is the MOU on as shaky ground as a lot of people, even the American people in polls, are assuming?

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, I'm not sure if this is hugely consequential. I mean, it could lead to, you know, maybe some diplomatic spat—or I'd hate to use the word diplomacy—but some political spat between the two countries. But at the end of the day, what it does is it reinforces the reality that Iran has operational control over the Strait of Hormuz. So, like it or not, you know, these types of incidents could happen, and certainly there's a strict protocol there. We are still, you know, the U.S. is still at war with Iran. There's been no peace treaty. So in terms of heightened security, that's just a reality. So, yeah, we'll see.

I don't think it's that big of an incident myself, but it does, again, indicate and remind everybody who's in charge of the Strait. It could have been a bigger international incident had it been from another country—a Singaporean-flagged vessel. Singapore is not... they're not insignificant, but they're not China, and they're not India. So we'll see how that develops. The other part that's more interesting, though, is what you mentioned, Danny, about the U.S. Standing Forces Agreement in the Persian Gulf. That really reflects, I think, the will of the Gulf states as much as anything. Certainly, the U.S. is exposed. The interesting thing is the underground bases—a talking point there.

That means that you can kind of admit that warfare is changing, basically. So I would imagine the United States would be perhaps investing in missiles and drones to be deployed from such facilities. But again, that's going to be subject to, I think, approval. All this is going to be part of the negotiations with Iran and the Gulf states going forward. So, you know, the U.S. is announcing, I think for the U.S. domestic audience—you're in America, so you'd know better than me at this particular moment—but I think the U.S. domestic audience, I don't know if they've quite, if it's landed that they don't have the presence in the region, in the Middle East, that they once had.

Like they physically will never regain it. That's my belief. But I don't know if that idea has fully landed yet in America. So when we see announcements from the Pentagon or from this government, I would assume the domestic audience is an important part of that—how that plays with the domestic audience. I see so many problems with any U.S. military facility in the region. Yeah, but so what does that mean? That means that the United States will be putting a lot more into covert actions and covert operations, Syria being a perfect example of that. When Trump telegraphed that Jalani might do a better job fighting Hezbollah, that wasn't just an insult or a slight to the Israelis.

That's Trump telegraphing an operation. He's always had a problem keeping his mouth shut, even though he always boasts about being the guy that nobody knows what he's about to do—Mr. Surprise—and keeping his enemies off balance, his allies off balance, his own government off balance, and the world off balance. So is Syria going to be a new dirty war? Is the U.S. going to reignite and mobilize its Israelis, and the Americans mobilize their assets—Al Qaeda, ISIS assets in Syria—to unleash a violent civil war on Lebanon? These are legitimate questions at this point. Yeah, they are.

#Danny

And the interesting part about this, I think about all these developments, is that the Wall Street Journal is getting out ahead of Washington, even on the escalations in the Strait of Hormuz. It's the Wall Street Journal that are reporting it first. Actually, it took more than a day for Donald Trump just to react to what happened to that Singaporean vessel. But even this, what you were talking about, this report by the Wall Street Journal—this is what they published: a satellite image of the U.S. Naval Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. There has been no word from CENTCOM or the Pentagon about what they're actually going to do.

It's all the Wall Street Journal publishing that, indeed, these bases are so damaged that it's going to cost so much money that they might even have to consider going underground with some installations to protect whatever they're going to keep there. And then coming up with really what I would call strange ideas, maybe desperate ideas, of maybe some single runways like they tried during that commando raid. So it's a little less predictable where their installations are going to be. But nonetheless, all of this points to a big pondering about whether the United States military will have a big presence in the Middle East at all.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, and it's not just the military aspect of it. It's the political side of it as well. All of this war and the conflict over the last three months has raised some fundamental questions. The most obvious is why. Why are the U.S. in the region? Why do they need to maintain a position in the region? They had an excuse before. They had a rationale before. It was to provide a security umbrella for their Gulf allies. At least that's what the official line was for the longest time. And, of course, we know that that would be to protect the integrity of the petrodollar, and also the predictability of world energy markets and so forth.

But what they told the Gulf states—the political pitch for the U.S. position in the region—was always that they needed protection from the Iranian threat. That was always the political pitch. And then for Israel, we now know the broader agenda is to provide a security umbrella really for Israel, not the Gulf, because we saw what happened to the Gulf states in the first hours of this war with Iran that began on February 28th. The U.S. just painted a massive target on all of them, as you've shown here on screen just now, and in the other locations—Kuwait thoroughly trashed, as well as Bahrain, damage to Saudi Arabia, UAE, and so forth.

So I'll throw Jordan in there as well, although it's not a Gulf oil sheikdom, but it is a sort of protectorate nonetheless. So, why are the U.S. there? I think this question has to be revised. Because if it's to keep an eye on Iran, you know, why? You know, what are they going to do? They've already gone toe-to-toe with the Iranians. They've already kept an eye to make sure they're not developing a nuclear weapon. They don't need to have bases in the Persian Gulf for that. So these questions are going to have to get answered in the U.S. politically. And I think they're having a hard time. They're having a hard time. Iran's not afraid of the United States. That's clear.

So the deterrence is no longer effective. So it would have to be not just—before it was just the U.S. presence that provided the deterrence, the threat that the U.S. might get involved that provided the deterrence. Now the presence has to be technical. It has to have a function. And if it's going to be a casus belli or put a target on the Gulf states, then that's not—what's the utility in that for the host country, really? So this is a question. And it can't be just for Israel because that card has already been played and that hand is a bust at the moment. So, you know, if they just need to be there for covert, you know, to provide support for covert action, that makes sense from a military CIA point of view.

But what the hell are you doing in the region with covert actions? No one asked those questions before. Now those are all on the table for discussion because nobody's under any illusion now. They've already done the subterfuge, the regime change, the mobs, the armed mobs in Iran. They've done all that—assassinating leaders. So the agenda is pretty clear. I don't think the Iranians are really going to have a lot of patience for some of this, even if it's incrementalism on the part of the U.S. So we'll see. Again, this is all going to be part of ongoing political negotiations and positioning between Iran and the Gulf allies.

#Danny

Why do you believe Donald Trump, for a lot less, sometimes without even—without anything happening, comes out with very strong threats against Iran, oftentimes not backed up? Sometimes there is retaliation. There has been retaliation, but of course, not since the MOU was agreed upon. But all he had to say about this latest incident in the Strait of Hormuz was, "Obviously, this is a foolish violation of our ceasefire agreement." Nothing else. No other words. And it took a while just to even react to this, let alone the reports about the military, the damage to the U.S. military in the region, which he still claims, in stark denial, that no, it's not the U.S. that's been damaged, it's only Iran. Iran has been knocked out. All they want to do is give us everything. What have you made of this dynamic? It's a change in tone because it's all about now how the U.S. has won. Iran is giving us everything, and everything's going very, very, very well.

#Patrick Henningsen

Well, that's how it has to be communicated to the American public and to the Europeans as well. But I think people in the region know better. They know what the real situation is. So he's not—these ridiculous tweets that—I mean, besides the fact that the president of the United States is doing foreign policy on a website that he owns, in itself, is just so strange and bizarre and shouldn't be taken seriously. I'm going to say this is not a serious administration, and it's very inconsistent and erratic. Trump's communications, as you rightly point out, are very erratic, all over the place. His position will flip from, like, you know, even between breakfast and dinner. There will be a complete 180. So it's not serious, and it's not anything you can base any real relations on.

It's not anything that's going to engender any trust in the United States. A lot of people are just hanging back, just bracing themselves for what the U.S. might do next in terms of aggression—some sort of attack, sanctions, or some other sort of belligerent move by the U.S. I think, for it to be a constructive actor in the region—I'm going to go so far as to say, I mean, you probably will gather I'm hugely skeptical of this peace process. I think it's doomed. It's potentially doomed to fail ultimately because of a number of reasons, one of which is the Israel factor. It just provides a type of structural flaw in everything that gives a potential for failure almost at every single juncture. Now, things are stable.

A couple of days ago, you know, relatively speaking, they issued a non-offensive shooting order from the Israelis, reportedly imposed by the U.S. But, you know, that might hold for like 72 hours, or—I don't think it's actually held, quite frankly, based on the reports that we've seen. But, you know, for the most part, maybe a week. But who knows? There could be anything. And whatever breaks it is going to be strategic on the part of the Israelis as well. So this is why it's really hard to put a whole lot of currency and expectations in this peace process being successful. The Trumps and his record are horrible, really bad. So we're meant to keep our hopes up. Really successful propaganda is always based on something that people desire to happen.

They really are desperate to see it happen, and that is always the most effective propaganda. So in a way, the administration can use this to really push very potent propaganda because people are exasperated. People are desperate. They're fed up and they're tired of the U.S. and Israel and what they've done. And so they can really kind of, I don't know, get people on board with this process, thinking this is great, we're making progress. But a lot of it, as we've seen already, is propaganda. A lot of the statements made by J.D. Vance, by Donald Trump, by the government are completely false, completely fake. And it just shows you that they're not serious about negotiations. They're not serious about diplomacy.

Maybe they'll get serious a bit, and maybe for a while, but I don't see the deep commitment. What I do suspect is that they're going to hedge their position with covert actions. That's my best guess. That's my educated guess. You never trust the United States. They're not honest. They're not a government of their word, especially this administration. They're very underhanded. Look at what they've done already. So they don't negotiate in good faith. That's clear. We have proof and receipts for that. So I hope the Iranians are aware of this and vigilant about the potential here. I've always said, in the last couple of weeks especially, that this is a real stalemate.

This is a deadlock for Israel. Iran imposing itself in this process and making Lebanon at the top of the list of priorities has created a real stalemate for the Israelis. The only thing that can break that, to me, there are only two, maybe three scenarios that could break it. One is a targeted assassination that could cause a chain of events. The other is a false flag attack, which would again cause a chain of events that would cascade into something that would cause quite a lot of chaos, and normal diplomatic negotiations wouldn't have enough bandwidth to deal with it.

Third thing is a third-party actor being thrust into the scene in order to create chaos and instability. And Israel would take their cues at that point to consolidate. So basically, using a proxy to attack Hezbollah is an example. That one looks like it's more than just plausible. It's now drifting into the realm of probability at this point. I think they're so desperate. This is just unacceptable for the Israelis internally. The United States has a hard time managing Israel and all the pro-Israel surrogates and all the various operatives in Trump's own administration, as well as in the media and in politics in America.

So these three scenarios, I think, in this case, are likely, and if history is any guide, this is exactly how Israel, I think, managed the Lebanese Civil War back in the 1980s. So the same type of, I don't know, statecraft sorcery was applied back then to create false pretexts for invasions and all sorts of other things. So I would assume, and that was the same, it was a deadlock before in Lebanon in the 80s, similar situation now, slightly different characteristics, but I would bet on Israel using the same methods in order to break that stalemate and move things in their direction, gain momentum, and at the expense of the Lebanese, absolutely.

There's nothing the Americans and the Israelis would like more than to see a bloody, violent civil war in Lebanon. This is what they stay up at night hoping and wishing for. And they've already done everything possible to this point to try to make that happen politically. But now, are they going to apply force to make that happen by introducing a third party into the mix? That remains to be seen.

#Danny

Yeah, the question of Lebanon is very much unresolved. Now there are these reports, supposedly, that there's some renewed ceasefire arrangement. I feel like this term is beginning to lose all meaning. And I think it loses even more meaning when we hear Donald Trump. This isn't us being so-called Trump derangement syndrome or anything like that. As you said, this is the record. So I believe it's actually worrisome whenever we hear someone as addicted to deception as Donald Trump is talk about how everything is going well and Iran wants to give everything to them and there's nothing going on. Here's his mood lately.

#Donald Trump

Navy, they had 159 ships within one and a half weeks. They were all at the bottom of the sea. And then I have to listen to the fake news: "Oh, they're much better today." These people are crazy. They want to make a deal with us very badly. And we probably will. I think we will. But the Strait is open. Yesterday, they took out 19 million barrels of oil. That's the most in the history of the Strait. And the oil prices are dropping like a rock. And, you know.

#Danny

You know, it's interesting, though. Not only is there about a fourth of the activity before the war occurring in the Strait of Hormuz, lots and lots of ships still stranded there, but the gas prices are not going down in conjunction with the oil prices going down. Actually, I can just walk down the block and see that the reduction in gas prices is about 20%, 30%, 40% maybe? Yeah. But the drop in oil prices is down into the high 60s, early 70s. Even the Trump administration is getting a little angry at this. The oil companies are saying, tough. But your thoughts about this kind of mood? I feel like when there is this kind of mood going on, just like anything else, this feels like a pause in an attempt to build up a different kind of approach to this war, knowing that, as we've talked about on the show, midterms are coming up, and the political fallout has been really bad.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah. What in the world? Did he say 18 billion barrels? Yeah, I think he said 19, actually. 19 billion barrels of oil. Do you realize what's the global production in a year? What the hell is he talking about? You know, per day before the war, was it 20 million barrels before the war per day? That's full capacity. 20 million barrels of oil before the war. Where did he get 18 billion? I mean, I'm not being nitpicky, but it's things like that. If the president of the United States just doesn't inspire any confidence, it makes one question whether he understands what he's talking about. Um, maybe he meant million. I don't know. Yeah.

#Danny

I think he said million, but even so, yeah, the activity is far exaggerated.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, it's probably exaggerated, what he's saying as well. Even if he meant million, uh, I'm sure. So, um, yeah. Yeah, the energy shock's priced into the market already. So he's trying to sell this like this is somehow a quick fix and he's taking credit for it, and it's going to be—everything's going to be great, gas prices are going to fall. No, it's that it's a huge disruption in the global supply chain, not to mention all the inflationary pressures that are going to come with that as well, not to mention the stock market crash that's coming from the overvaluation of the AI stocks.

This is a perfect storm, and there's really nothing this president can do to make it right, and he's actually responsible for all of it. He's going to have to own it at some point. My fear, Danny, would be if he doesn't want to own it, because people like this don't like to take responsibility for anything. So he will look for an excuse to blame it on somebody, and who knows, maybe even feel compelled to attack somebody after he's blamed them for the failure of this deal, which is not going to fail because of anything Iran's doing. It's going to fail most likely because of something the U.S. or Israel has done. So I don't think we're out of the woods yet. When you see this, that's the problem—this erratic talk.

Trump is either setting it up—he's setting up the board for some future move, an underhanded move sometimes—but it's definitely not stable talk. It's not a reliable sort of discourse that indicates anything stable from the U.S., or committed and consistent. No, it's not stable. That's the problem. I always worry about the advisors, because normally a president would have good advisors that would prevent him from making a fool out of himself or creating more problems by the things that he says. Clearly, that's not the case. This president doesn't have any such advisors. So if he doesn't have any advisors that want to keep him out of trouble, who is his top advisor?

Is it himself? Is he his top advisor? Because that's pretty frightening. Just a legitimate question. And certainly, I hope it's not. His top advisor is Jared Kushner, his son-in-law. That's not great either. So I don't know. I think this process personally is going nowhere. I think it will net, hopefully, some positive steps in the interim that might create conditions for a possible future framework. I hope so. Unsanctioning of oil and restraining Israel, even temporarily—I think these are all positive things. Everyone's very happy about these things. But long term, can they stick to it? Can they make it happen long term? Can they remain consistent? We're not sure. It's not convincing.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of—as this process goes from days to weeks into months—now I've noticed that there is a lot more concern arising about whether, you know, this ceasefire, this MOU, is a good deal for Iran. Of course, we've covered on this show that the terms are indeed very much favorable to Iran. But at the same time, there are those who are concerned about, I think, perhaps the giving up of leverage over time. The longer that this goes on, the more that things ease in the Strait of Hormuz.

There have been some people also who have not been happy about the possibilities of a long-term conversation with the United States about Lebanon, about even Gaza taking place when the United States, as you said, can't be trusted to fulfill any of its terms. I'm curious what you believe this all means for Iran and for the world right now, that we have this seemingly cracking so-called ceasefire, this MOU, which, you know, the longer this goes on, the 60 days will come up very soon. And, you know, it doesn't look promising that somehow all of these terms, all of these issues in this MOU will be resolved then.

#Patrick Henningsen

If you think the U.S. is honest in doing this in good faith and not just buying time to restock and resupply their munitions and that of their ally Israel—interceptors, JDAM bombs, restocking basically for potentially another round of hostilities—I think that would be naive to assume that's not the case. I would absolutely assume that's the case. Certainly from an Israeli point of view, that's absolutely a requirement. Absolute requirement. They're not planning for peace, Israel. So if Israel's not planning for peace, the United States still supports them, still supplies them, still helps manage their whole defense array, and they're right there side by side with them.

So that's going to happen. So there's a buildup happening now and a reconfiguration of forces and capabilities in the region. It's happening now. So the U.S., when they're stronger, they'll be in a position to perhaps be a little bit more aggressive. They're not right now. They're in a very, I think, weak position, the U.S. and Israel, especially compared to where they were before. And strategically, Israel has its objectives, but the U.S. has no strategy anymore. They've got nothing. They have no strategy, just playing spoiler, I guess. That's the role in the region. I don't see any real clear strategy.

The strategy was to make sure Iran doesn't have a nuclear weapon. This is kind of a bogus claim as well. They're doing nuclear talks now, and I think Iran can just go through the motions and keep the U.S. busy with this for a while, in fact. So it's almost like you're really getting tired of Trump boasting about how many ships he sunk, how many Iranian planes he's destroyed or whatever. What's the basis for the U.S. attacking Iran, taking out their Navy? Did the Iranian Navy ever fire on the U.S.? No, they didn't. Did the U.S. sink any Iranian ships, unarmed ships? Yes, they did. Did they kill Iranian sailors? Yeah.

So if anyone has a motivation to, uh, attack the U.S. naval assets in the region, it's Iran, and they would be within their right to do that under the laws of war. Uh, but, uh, that's always a problem. So if it's just about bragging how much of the other side's things you destroyed or wrecked, this is a bad look for the U.S. Americans are kind of writing it off at the moment, but I think internationally it's a very, very bad look for the U.S. Again, I would advise somebody who's advising the president to sort of tell him to put a sock in it because he's doing so much damage to himself, to the office, to the U.S., and their reputation on the international stage.

So I'm, again, worried that there's no such person that can restrain him. I'm really reticent and not 100% believing. There's a lot of pundits on podcasts and things like that, and they'll say things like, "Trump really doesn't want to go to war with Iran. He's never wanted to go to war with Iran." And I really believe in my heart of hearts that Trump really doesn't want this war. He was pushed into it by the Israelis. It doesn't make a difference at this point what he wanted or didn't want five years ago or two years ago. The fact is he did it. He did it, and he committed the U.S. to it. He doesn't know necessarily why he did it.

He doesn't know why it's wrong. He might sort of have an idea now. He's heard enough press and listened to enough people that he might know why it's bad. But in terms of him being inherently anti-war or inherently virtuous, I don't believe it for a second. I don't believe—I think for him, he's a moral relativist. And his morals and ethics are just relative to the situation in a transactional sense. So I hear this a lot. And why is that important? Because people are always trying to track the motivation behind and the psychology of this president and saying that he's got this dove side. I'm sorry, I see no indication of this at all.

I think the only reason they have stopped is because they've been restrained. Simple. Either restrained by their inability to keep fighting or restrained by the Iranians and restrained by their Gulf

allies, quite frankly. And domestically, some members of the U.S. political Congress or Senate—certain members—and the crowd that they command, including Tucker Carlson, Thomas Massie, and others, Candace Owens, and these sort of right-wing conservative pundits, and the fact that Tucker announced he's leaving the Republican Party, that's a huge warning shot ahead of the midterms for Trump.

So—but yeah, I'm not convinced, Danny, that there's this kind of crypto anti-war, kind of virtuous Trump hiding behind the mask, you know, following the instructions of his better angels. I just don't see it. I haven't seen it from the beginning. So that's why I'm—again, I'm very skeptical of anything that he does that looks or sounds like it's mildly positive or resembling common sense, because I know it might not actually be authentic. It might not be, you know, a deep-seated value or a part of his, an integral part of his, you know, his leadership.

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, I would highly caution on so many things. First of all, anyone who is involved and is part of the Epstein class, as some people are talking about, I think we should caution anyone against looking too deeply into what kind of value system these people hold that has anything to do with restraining themselves on violence, war, any kind of exploitation. I'd be highly doubtful of that. And also, even the relationship with Israel—be highly doubtful. We've been through this rodeo before. Oh my God, look at all the conflict, the phone calls, all of this. And then we see in the medium term, the medium-long term, the collaboration remains very ironclad. I would not put much stock in this beyond the need for a pause.

Maybe I could see a little bit of disagreement, like, okay, the U.S. wanting a pause and Israel being like, no, no, no pause. Beyond that, I just don't see why there would be any disagreement. And then just to pile on the motivations, why we shouldn't be looking too deeply into motivations—I mean, this is someone, Patrick, that continues to deny one of the worst war crimes of the 21st century, maybe the worst single war crime of the 21st century: the bombing of the Manab school that was obviously conducted by U.S. Tomahawk missiles, killing over 168 children. This is his response to any question about it: continued denial and absolutely no care. Not even a care about the U.S.'s image for denying such a thing when everyone in the world knows it was the U.S. who did it.

#Donald Trump

Look, you have to say he's courageous. He's got great equipment. But he's got—can I ask you one other question? Yeah. Have you seen the report into the Manab school attack, sir? Can you tell us—I have not seen it, no. Why not? At this point, well, I have to wait for it to be completed. I don't know that they're ever going to solve that problem. I mean, you can ask Pete, but I don't know that they're ever—they're going to say it was one of our missiles. Pete, I don't know that they're ever going to solve that problem in terms of whose fault it was, because there were missiles flying all over the place. And it's horrible what happened, but there were missiles flying all over the place. And

somebody said it was our missile. Well, maybe it wasn't our missile, but I've seen nothing to lead me to believe it was. There were plenty of missiles being flown by other people. What do you think?

#Danny

By other people. The Israelis probably using your missiles if it was the Israelis. But nonetheless, you were working together. Very proud on February 28th. I know you remember that, Patrick. They were very proud of their collaboration then. But yeah, this is what I'm talking about. It's like we shouldn't be looking too deeply into motivations here when obviously the center of these people has nothing to do with morals.

#Patrick Henningsen

He would rather walk over a bed of fiery red-hot coals and broken glass than ever admit or take responsibility for the myriad of war crimes he's guilty of. And you see how he deflects, too. He's so insecure. He's such a coward, our president. He has to deflect to the Fox News weekend host, Pete Hegseth. "So what do you think, Pete? It wasn't one of ours, was it?" This is the same type of cope you saw in Gaza when Israel hit a hospital and they tried to blame it on Hamas. They said, "Oh, it wasn't an Israeli missile. It was a Hamas missile that misfired and did a U-turn and ended up hitting the hospital." Just totally shameless. Israeli and U.S. mainstream propaganda—this is worse because it was a double tap. You know, it was a double tap. So just what a coward, completely shameless hustler, Donald Trump.

It's not even embarrassing at this point. You know, when you see that, that's why a lot of Republicans and former supporters can't stand the sight of him. They just don't want to see him anymore. The mere sight and sound of his voice induces nausea at this point. These are his supporters. And it's because of that. He's just a fundamentally dishonest and dark, mean-hearted person deep down. He doesn't have a compassionate bone in his body. He is an absolute robot on autopilot, a narcissistic android, as far as we can see. So, I mean, it's just ridiculous. And, you know, it's also the whole shtick of him holding court with his entourage that's just so embarrassing. That is a fundamentally weak leader who needs to always be flanked by his entourage of stooges, yes-men, who sit there, "Yes, sir. Yes, Mr. President."

He's got one next to him, the loony Dutchman, Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO. What does it take to do that job? Whatever. And he's got pie charts and—he's showing off to daddy and trying to ingratiate himself with the president. Just the sycophancy of that whole display with Mark Rutte from the Netherlands is embarrassing. And he's clearly angling for a job in Washington with some defense contractor. So he's absolutely kissing the you-know-what of Donald Trump. But what Rutte did, what's funny about that, is he basically was bragging about how many U.S. flights—you know, how NATO played a role in attacking Iran. Yeah. I have that clip, actually. I have that clip, actually. Oh, I'd love to see it.

#Danny

We can play that. It's very short, because I wanted to actually talk about this and what it means for Europe and, of course, whatever else you wanted to say. Here you go.

#Fox News

I think so. Yes, you're right. And I totally understand the disappointment. But when you take, for example, Italy—500 U.S. planes took off from U.S. bases in Italy to support Operation Epic Fury. So this is massive. When you look at all of Europe, between 4,000 and 5,000— a country like Romania, its capital, Bucharest, they had to cut down on commercial air flights and airplanes because they had to use the airports for the tanker facilities. So all this is taking place.

#Danny

So there you go. Europe was a major party to the war on Iran, which, of course, is very good for Europe. Right, Patrick? Whatever you—please continue.

#Patrick Henningsen

I know we interrupted early. What he's done there is—I'm glad he's done this because it's opened up a big conversation. And he's implicated Italy and Romania, and we can also throw Germany and Britain and other countries, Greece, into that mix—these NATO members. He's implicated them in an illegal, undeclared war of aggression. Completely illegal, completely unprovoked, and just rapacious killing of Iranian civilians and infrastructure, and just trying to do damage. War crimes, crimes against humanity. He's implicated all these NATO countries. So what Mark Rutte has basically done there is say that Europe's in the war. Europe's part of the war. We are a co-belligerent.

Europe is a co-belligerent in the war. Iran didn't violate Article 5. They did attack some U.S. bases where the U.S. is in NATO. How come the European countries didn't send their air force to attack Iran? Of course, they didn't send anything. They're not going to do anything because the United States is NATO. But what they've done there is, Iran, according to the laws of war, would have every right to fire an intermediate-range ballistic missile at any of these bases in Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, or Germany. And what would the Europeans do? Oh, there would just be righteous indignation and outrage. How dare these Central Asians attack Europe?

This is an unprovoked attack on Europe. We can't allow this to stand. We mustn't appease. This is Hitler all over again. It's Poland, Gleiwitz. That's the reaction of the Europeans, not having any self-awareness to understand that they are a co-belligerent. They've allowed their bases, like Saudi, like Bahrain, like Kuwait, like the other Gulf states, like the UAE, that basically incriminated themselves

by hosting U.S. military bases that were used to attack and murder Iranians and destroy Iranian infrastructure, which is a war crime. So they painted a target on themselves, technically. Now, Iran's not doing that. They're probably not going to do that.

But if they wanted to, they could. And they would be completely, legally, according to international law, within their rights. And Mark Rutte himself just impugned Italy and all of these countries. He just sentenced Europe to a future debit on their ledger, okay? You notice how nobody ran to the defense of the Gulf states because they couldn't make a legal argument, because Iran was right. Did you notice that? Nobody came to their aid, really, because they couldn't. They're caught with their pants down, allowing the U.S. to use them as lily pads for attacking and starting a massive, risky, and horrendous war. And the Europeans are no different than the Gulf states in that respect.

#Fox News

No different.

#Patrick Henningsen

The only difference is it's white Europe. They wouldn't dare attack us. We can attack them, that's fine. We're okay with that. Let's celebrate it—500 U.S. flights from Italy. You want a standing ovation for Mark Rutte. Oh, but if the Iranians hit back? No, no, no, that's an act of war. Snapback sanctions and all the rest of it. This aggression must not stand. I mean, I'm so sick of these people. But this is the same convoluted argument they use with Russia.

They've been able to sell this with Russia and erase the fact of everything that happened from the Maidan and NATO's proxy war in the Donbass for eight years prior to February 2022. They're able to whitewash all that because they have total control of their own media and political discourse to the point where most people don't even know what actually happened in Ukraine and how it happened, much less have a clue that the United States initiated a violent coup and a civil war in that country which led to Russian intervention in the Donbass. But with Iran, it's no different. It's no different. So really, I think that's one of the really obvious failures of the argument coming from the West. Mark Rutte just exposed it. I mean, we have to thank him.

We need to send him a card or maybe a box of cookies or biscuits or something to thank him for doing that. Victoria Nuland, when you need her. Yeah, the bag. Mrs. Fields. So that's one of them. The other one is there's another collusion. I don't want to belabor this point because I've talked about this a lot recently, because I think it's a central point and it needs to be discussed. This can no longer be relegated to the kind of "can't talk about it" category. The whole basis of the impasse in Lebanon is based on one thing: that the U.S., Israel, and its allies have labeled Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. And that gives them carte blanche to occupy Lebanon, to violate international law, to do everything outside of international law.

The United Nations does not designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, and neither do most countries in the world. But Israel does, and its allies must. If Israel insists, that's why those designations exist. Hezbollah hasn't attacked any European countries. They don't have an expeditionary terrorist arm, but they are legally proscribed as a terrorist organization. And their political wing, which holds the majority of seats in the Lebanese parliament, is also proscribed as a terrorist organization. Explain how you do that. But that's the problem. That is the seed of everything, because that's allowed them to isolate Hezbollah, and it's allowed them to leave them kind of to fend for themselves in South Lebanon, to repel the Israeli invasion, to protect the southern border, okay?

Um, if they allowed the Lebanese Armed Forces to have all of the equipment, like an air force and air defense to control their own airspace, Israel would not be able to roam around carte blanche in Lebanon. And there would be, you know, resistance and negotiations ultimately, because force meets force, so ultimately it's going to be negotiations. There's nothing now, just bullying, and a Lebanese Armed Forces policy of not engaging with Israel. So Hezbollah is engaging with them, and this is all by design. This has been engineered, this situation, over decades, because the U.S. wants to separate, and Israel wants to separate, the Lebanese army from Hezbollah. They don't want them to integrate like the Iraqis did after the battle with ISIS, when the Hashid was folded under the Iraqi MOD. They don't want that in Lebanon.

They want to isolate them so they can pick them off, and also so that gives them an excuse to invade and occupy. That's simple. And this is the basis of it. There have been groups that have been proscribed as terrorist groups and then the proscriptions reversed. It's happened to the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization. That's a good example. What about the MEK? The United States had them listed as a terrorist organization. Now they're not, for different reasons obviously, not for anything good that the MEK has done. Although pouring money into the pockets of U.S. congressmen and senators is probably a good thing in Washington. That's what the MEK has been doing since Hillary Clinton lifted their proscription in 2012. They're just pumping money into the U.S. political system—bribe money to get them to, well, they promised that they'll achieve regime change in Iran.

That's the whole sales pitch for the MEK. So what I'm saying, Danny, is that's the center of the problem, actually. That's what's distorting the whole thing and creating this tripwire that's allowing Israel to break every rule to commit genocide. You could extend the same question to other resistance groups in Palestine. I'm not going to name any names, but take your pick. So that's another conversation that Europe is too afraid to have because they don't want to go against the Israel lobby in the United States. So they just go along to get along. Well, guess what? Look at the situation in Lebanon. Do you think this is good? And who are the terrorists in Lebanon? Who's been slaughtering civilians? Who's displaced 1.5 million people? Not Hezbollah. Israel has.

Who are the terrorists? Just look at the record. Look at what they've done. How long can they keep this facade going? This pantomime, this joke of a geopolitical theater—in the political sense, I mean.

It's not a joke on the ground, not for the Palestinians or the Lebanese. But in terms of the politics of it, it's a joke. It's a bad joke at this point. And shame on the political leaders in Europe and in the U. S. for allowing this pantomime to continue, all based on these political designations that are not objective definitions of anything. And again, the United States doesn't list any of these groups as terrorist groups. In fact, the UN Charter, Article 51, says, well, you have a right to armed violence, a liberation struggle by force if necessary, for self-defense.

So that's in Article 51. It's also enshrined in the Geneva Conventions, which we all ratified—our governments. We ratified the Geneva Conventions and international human rights law as well. So if the whole purpose of this deception is to take this situation out of an international law framework, to pull it out so that they can run their own bilateral justice framework between the U.S. and Israel—Hezbollah is completely compliant with international law and compliant with ceasefires. Israel's not. But they don't want to give them agency, and they can do that simply by slapping a label on them. It's as simple as that. This is the central, fundamental obstacle, in my opinion. And it's been abused, and look where it's got us. Look where it's got us. Not very good. Not a very good place.

#Danny

Yeah, the number of Israeli settlers that have been injured and/or killed by Hezbollah is such a dramatically small number, and we've covered that here on this program. And nonetheless, exactly as you said, they have the right to resist occupation. And you mentioned groups. You know, the precedent has been set in the past for the United States to undesignate terrorist groups. But there was one—remember, Patrick, 2024, what happened in Syria? HTS, a.k.a. Al-Qaeda in Syria, came to power with ISIS, Jolani as the figurehead. He had a massive bounty on his head by the U.S. State Department for how long? And now, no more bounty. And he is the president of Syria. And he sat down at the United Nations with who? David Petraeus and these types.

#Patrick Henningsen

He sat in the Oval Office, Danny.

#Danny

Yeah. Oh, and the cologne. He was given, what, two, three, a hundred colognes, you know.

#Patrick Henningsen

Yeah, so that was reversed. They reversed al-Qaeda. So don't tell me it's impossible and it can't be done. Of course it can be done. By the way, you mentioned people killed in northern Israel, okay? That is part of back-and-forth hostilities. But what started it? What started it? October 8th. October 9th, what happened? Hezbollah fired rockets on IDF positions, and the global headlines said, or what Trump calls the fake news, the fake news said Hezbollah attacked Israel. But that was a lie. Those

IDF positions were in occupied Lebanese-Syrian territory, the Shebaa Farms, not in Israel. Israel is in violation of international law, multiple UN resolutions by even being there.

They're legitimate targets, the IDF. So Hezbollah was merely firing at invaders, technically. And then Israel unleashed all hell after that against Lebanese troops, targets, and Hezbollah responded. So by the time you're into the response and counter-response and tit-for-tat, you can't go and sort of wag your finger and say that, you know, after Israel has completely slaughtered thousands of Lebanese civilians for no reason, you can't go and then complain if Hezbollah returns fire in northern Israel. So they can use the same justification Israel does in terms of their security. They are Lebanese, and they're not occupying Israeli land, but Israel is occupying Lebanese land—and lots of it now.

But even before that, they were occupying 13 different slivers behind the U.N. Blue Line or on the U. N. Blue Line. And they were supposed to leave those positions in 2000, and they didn't. Why? Oh, because of our security needs, Israel. So they don't have to abide by any international law. Look, if we imposed international law, if the U.S. decided it was going to do that, all of these problems would be gone like that. They would just evaporate. It would be over. But the U.S. can't do that because they themselves don't want to be pulled up on all their violations of international law. That's the problem. Yeah, you can't open that can of worms.

#Danny

Nope, you cannot. Well, you know, in the last five minutes that we have, Patrick, I mean, I think it must be noted that whether it's Hezbollah, Palestinian resistance, and let's put Iran—I mean, of course, we put Ansar Allah in there—let's put Iran in there now, even with what we opened with in the Strait of Hormuz throughout this whole period, whether it was firing on tankers or targeting U.S. assets in the region, the number of human beings, whatever you think, whether it's U.S. military or people on these tankers that have been injured or killed, is minuscule compared to what Iran has experienced.

And Iran intentionally, we can see it, even with something like hitting this tanker with a drone or the U.S. assets—they're out there to destroy the assets. They don't actually really care to hurt people. You don't think that, uh, Karaj Bar, however you say it, or any of these advanced Iranian missiles and these drones can't kill people? You don't think they could have gotten that F-15 pilot? They could have, probably, but they don't, in large part because they follow the laws of war and they have no interest. Actually, I believe in Iran—for Iran, and probably for a lot of the resistance—killing people is probably seen as not the most desirable thing when it comes to how they follow their principles.

#Patrick Henningsen

But it may, you know, dead U.S. soldiers could advance the Iranian cause insofar as they might create pressure in the U.S. political system to de-escalate or withdraw. But that's not their intention. And if it was, as you said, Danny, they could have done a lot more.

#Danny

You don't have to be so targeted. Yeah, certainly. They knew where the troops who fled the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and started staying in the hotels, or the same in the UAE, started staying in the hotels. They knew where those hotels were. They could have easily... But then, you know, you might put the migrant workers in the UAE and Bahrain, the Arab population, whatever, at risk. And so... turns out that the resistance is thinking a little bit more about morals and principles—shocker—than the empire.

#Patrick Henningsen

They're much more circumspect all the way around. The U.S. is not. Israel certainly is not. Let's not forget that Trump said he was going to end their civilization. I mean, that's not an empty threat. It's not an empty threat because they've already sort of begun doing that or attempted to do that. You saw those black clouds over Tehran when they were targeting oil storage facilities in a city with a population of 12 million or 15 million. And all the health effects, generational health effects that people are going to experience from that. Do these people in America care about that? Do they care about all the pregnant women that might have had miscarriages because of that, or all the poisoned drinking water, and all the children that are going to be chronically ill going into the future because of that? Do they really care? No.

#Danny

Well, thanks to those who gave super chats. This is an interesting question, Patrick. Do you have a 60-second explainer of how the United States started the war in Ukraine? Ask if we have videos. I mean, you could watch both of our coverage of this over the course of years.

#Patrick Henningsen

I'll give you 60 seconds. The United States backed a violent coup in Kiev, in the Maidan, in February of 2014, with the express intent of regime change. And that basically triggered a violent civil war of eight years, whereby the United States encouraged Poroshenko, and then Zelensky after him, to deploy their army to attack and kill their own people in the Donbass—Ukrainians, Ukrainian nationals who spoke Russian. And 14,000 people were killed as they were shelling civilians in Donbass. And that went on for eight years. Russia basically said, this has to stop. They did a UN resolution. A Security Council resolution was unanimously passed to do the Minsk Accords.

And the Germans and the French intentionally sandbagged it, as did Poroshenko and Zelensky, to buy time for NATO to arm up the Ukrainians for a bigger war against Russia. So it was all by design. One hundred percent. And I'm just giving you like one percent of that story there. But that's what you need to know. And Russia said if the U.N. Security Council Resolution 2202 for the Minsk peace process fails, we will have no choice but to intervene. Probably. And guess what they did? So the Europeans and the Americans intentionally sabotaged the U.N. Security Council peace resolution, intentionally sabotaged it.

They're on record—Angela Merkel, François Hollande, Poroshenko, and Zelensky—four people admitted it on record. This isn't a conspiracy theory. That's what happened. And Russia did exactly what it said it was going to do: do a humanitarian intervention to protect their people in eastern Ukraine. And then Europe and the West, all holy murder—oh my God, this injustice must not stand, this aggression by Putin, it came out of nowhere. He woke up one day and decided he was going to take over Ukraine, and if we let him take over Ukraine, he's going to roll all the way to the English Channel. In a nutshell, that's the narrative right there.

#Danny

Yeah. No, great summary. Uh, everybody, thanks so much for joining today. I want to make sure everyone knows that 21st Century Wire, uh, which Patrick leads, the great outlet, is in the video description below the YouTube channel. So be sure to subscribe there and support it, as well as Patrick's Substack. Patrick, any final words before we head out of here today?

#Patrick Henningsen

Uh, no, no, not at all. Um, I will say thank you very much, Danny, for the invitation, the conversation. Keep an eye on the economy. That's what I'll tell people, really. Keep an eye on the economy. Close eye.

#Danny

Yeah, definitely. All right, everybody, thanks for the super chats. Thanks to all the moderators who moderated. Thanks to all the viewers, of course, who viewed. As you leave here, be sure to hit the like button. That helps boost the show in YouTube's algorithm. And I'll be back tomorrow with my friend Mohamed Marandi, 12 p.m. Eastern time. See you then.