

Iran DEFIES Trump, US Deploys 20 Warships – War HOURS AWAY | Sleboda

International affairs and military analyst Mark Sleboda discusses the countdown to total war as Trump's Saturday ultimatum comes with US warships deployment to Iran's doorstep. Tehran has just shown major defiance, and war appears imminent. We discuss what comes next and the true state of all war fronts in this must-watch show. <https://boosty.to/therealpolitick> 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 back to the show, everyone. As you can see, I have Mark Sloboda here with me. First, the news. So, Donald Trump set a Saturday deadline—that means today—for the Iranian government, for Iran, to essentially publicly apologize and state that it was going to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. Since this time, we now have about four hours left on that deadline, and according to anonymous U.S. officials telling Axios, who else, that if this deadline was not met, then there would be a resumption of war. Of course, the narrative has been, Mark, that the Iranian government, that Iran, came to the United States after two days of strikes by the United States and retaliation by Iran, saying that they wanted to negotiate, and this was the narrative of Donald Trump. But according to Fars News, and a source close to them said, they deny this altogether.

And then this morning, right before we came on, Ayatollah Moshnehmadi, the new Supreme Leader, despite fears by the Trump administration and by the Western mainstream media of a so-called plot to assassinate Donald Trump, and despite threats against Iran if such a thing occurs, Ayatollah Moshnehmadi did say that there will be revenge for the criminal, the disgraceful murderers of the Supreme Leader. Vengeance is what the nation is demanding, and that will definitely be done. But Mark, maybe you can help us understand these events in the context of what's just happened here with this war going on—the strikes now leading into this deadline of a so-called resumption of war. Iran is saying Trump came to them to try to continue negotiations, but they are not having it until the MOU is followed. Your thoughts on the latest developments here?

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah, so I'm perfectly willing to believe, and I don't even think it requires a stretch of belief whatsoever, that there are divisions of opinion within the Iranian political elite, right, within the various institutions of Iranian government and power on how to proceed at this point. And we know that there are divisions because, you know, even if it weren't obvious that there are in essentially any government, you know, particularly one whose ranks have been thinned and replaced as extensively as the Iranian government's have in the past few months.

But the new Supreme Leader, the son of the slain previous Supreme Leader, whose funeral was just held and who could not attend his own father's funeral because of the threat of assassination by the United States and Israel—and of course, it bears remembering that both the leader of Israel and the leader of the United States have at times threatened the life of the new Supreme Leader of Iran as well. I mean, as if there were any question about the matter. But he told us just a couple of weeks ago, when the Memorandum of Understanding came into effect, he put out a public statement that this was not his vision, that he was only signing off on this because it was being pushed by no less a person than the Iranian president, whom we know came to power as a reformer.

Right. He was elected in part, you know, to a large part because he wanted to improve relations with the West. So it is entirely within the realm of understanding that he wanted to continue, you know, to look for some type of diplomatic settlement. And he basically left what happened with the Memorandum of Understanding—he laid it at the president's feet, right? He basically said, if this goes south, it's all on you, bro. That's what he said in the letter that I read. That's certainly the way I interpret it. Is that what you read as well?

#Danny

Yeah, I mean, it definitely did seem like he was not approving it himself, but that he was going to let it be seen through by those who did want to pursue the process.

#Mark Sleboda

Yes, and if it went south, it was their fault. So that was what he said. And I think we can—the Western media loves talking about the hardliners in the Iranian government. I think we can assume that that's the new Supreme Leader, whose father, daughter, and other members of his family were just killed in these strikes, you know, assassinated by the U.S. and Israel. The IRGC, which is more powerful than ever in the Iranian government—and that was easily predictable even before the conflict started—that they would gain even more power within the Iranian government.

And what we've seen is a majority of the Assembly of Experts put out a statement supporting the Supreme Leader and his policy. As for those who are engaged in, shall we say, thinking that diplomacy might be a way out of this—or at least that's what they thought a couple of weeks ago when the memorandum of understanding came into effect—that would be the Iranian president,

Massoud Pazheshkian, perhaps the foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, and some elements behind him, and perhaps the speaker of the parliament, Ghalibaf. However, I think that after the most recent week, I don't think there is any faction within the Iranian government that is reaching out and begging Trump for a deal—a deal that Trump just broke, as far as the Iranians are concerned—and that are suddenly begging for him.

I mean, there are actually claims in the Western media that some people in the Iranian government—there are crazy hardliners who attacked those ships, right?—trying to demonstrate a show of force, and they want Trump to free them. I mean, that's literally what CBS News in the U.S. was reporting earlier today. I don't believe any of this, right? I can believe there are divisions, but I can't believe there are that kind of divisions, right? And I don't believe that the Iranians came back to Trump begging him for a deal. In fact, I have it on a pretty good source, and I believe this is genuine—that we have what amounts to an official reply from the entirety of the political elite to Trump's demand that they apologize for attacking shipping that the U.S. was trying to force and sneak through the Strait of Hormuz along the southern corridor, along the coast of Oman.

And the official reply is, and I quote, yeah. You got that? I mean, I think that's a pretty universal language. I think it comes through in Pashto as well as it does in English. That would be my reply to that egotistical maniac who has resulted in so many deaths in Iran, including the current leader's father and daughter and other members of his family. So, yeah, I don't think that's going anywhere. So the problem with the memorandum of understanding—and we talked about this when it was signed, when it was agreed upon, when the text first came out—and I know many other people in the alt media have identified the same thing—it was way too vague, right? It had loopholes in it so obviously big that you could drive a VLCC through it.

And which is, you know, literally what happened. Because particularly Article 5, the statement that regarded, shall we say, the state and the future of the Strait of Hormuz, left enough room in interpretation that Iran could read it as it said that they had administration, that they had, along with Oman, control over the Strait of Hormuz as the littoral states. And whatever the U.S. may say, by the strictest definition of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Strait of Hormuz is not international waters. Because at the narrowest point, the 12 nautical miles of territorial waters of Iran and Oman overlap, because it's only 21 nautical miles, right? Twelve on one side, 21—you can do the math, right?

So it is not technically an international waterway. It is within the purview of Iran and Oman. And Iran certainly understood the memorandum of understanding to say that passage through the Strait of Hormuz, the U.S. was agreeing, had to be done through coordination with them. However, the language of the English version is vague enough that the U.S. can read that as Iran and/or Oman. And what the U.S. has been trying to do since the memorandum of understanding came into effect, and even before that, is to co-opt Oman—to basically peel Oman off from Iran and push ships outside of Iranian control and outside of any coordination with Iran, out through the Strait of Hormuz, hugging the southern coast of Oman.

And while they have not put the U.S. Navy into the Strait of Hormuz to escort ships through there, they have used U.S. aircraft, I guess, to provide moral support or whatever in the skies above the Strait of Hormuz, launched from their carrier, that were guiding ships through. And until last weekend, the week previous, they were getting about 20 or 30 ships a day on average through that southern corridor. And all during the roughly week-long period of the funeral of the previous supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei—which, by the way, even the Financial Times recognizes was the largest funeral in recorded human history—with some counts between Iran and Iraq, because the body also flew to Iraq, to a couple of Shia-predominant cities, Najaf and Karbala, in Iraq as well.

And some 40 million-plus people attended that funeral. That has shocked Trump. I'm sure he hasn't even been told those numbers, but he's seen some numbers. I thought everyone hated him. That's what they told me, that everyone hated him in Iran and elsewhere. Maybe those tears aren't genuine. Maybe they're fake tears. That's what he said. What do you expect from a reality show star? But during the period of the funeral, Iran was obviously watching what the U.S. was doing, pushing more and more ships through the southern corridor. And actually, they used the UN body, the International Maritime Organization, which suffers from a high degree of Western institutional capture, and they tried to plaster the IMO over the southern corridor to give it a more official status.

But as of the weekend, Iran, during the weekend, started once again to send their speedboats to the southern part of the Strait. You know, it's not very far, of course. And then early in the week, they issued warnings to the ships passing through the southern corridor. And right now, there's not even any toll or service fee being charged, right? Because for the previous months, they were demanding a toll for passage through the Strait of Hormuz. But then, according to the memorandum of understanding, they agreed not to do so for 60 days—only 60 days—which I identified as a problem, because you're paying a service fee and then you stop, and then you're going to start it up again.

There's going to be some pushback there, quite obviously. And at various times, the Trump administration and the Europeans have said that's not acceptable, that Iran can't charge any service fee or toll or anything like that. Meanwhile, Oman is trying to straddle both sides of the fence. They obviously don't want to anger their neighbor to the north of the strait, their much larger and more powerful neighbor. And at various times, they've made statements about agreeing to joint control of the straits between the two of them and suggested even that service fees be voluntary. You know, they're trying to, you know, butter both sides of the bread here, as it were. And that's understandable. They're caught between the U.S. and Iran. And it's not a great situation for them.

But then when ships—a number of ships—and I believe the first were a Saudi and a Qatari tanker that were ignoring the Iranian demands to coordinate with them and use the northern corridor, Iran fired on them. Right. And I believe that was done in at least one case with drones, with aerial drones. And ultimately, they believe they fired on four tankers in total. And the U.S., within a day, had withdrawn the waiver from other countries—the secondary sanctions that they apply to other

countries for daring to trade with Iran. They removed that waiver; that was announced by the U.S. Treasury. And then they began the bombings again. They began the kinetic strikes against Iran, and Iran fired back, and the U.S. fired back, and Iran fired back—and that brings us to where we are through the week. And these have been the most intense skirmishes in the Strait of Hormuz.

We've seen them several times before, but since the hot phase of the war ended, they haven't been this intense, with 90, 80 strikes on either side in the salvos. And I've seen some pretty serious damage done on the Iranian side, and, you know, previously, from what we've seen, the damage being done to U.S. military bases—the Western media kept raising up the amount of damage that they admitted was done, you know, after satellite photos and so forth. So quite obviously, the Iranians are still now probably mostly firing on empty base infrastructure at this point. Probably all the Americans are well moved out of that. But, you know, that's what they can do at the moment. So there's no common agreement about really the most basic thing out of this, which is the Strait of Hormuz, and Trump cannot walk away from this with the Strait of Hormuz recognized as under Iranian control.

Because it wasn't like that before he went in and broke it, right? So he can't claim victory if the Iranians are charging service fees and everyone's coordinating with them going through. So he's in a tough position there. No one is talking anymore about enriched—uh, the levels of enriched uranium, right? That was even in the memorandum of understanding, pushed to the very end of the process. When everything else was agreed upon, then the Iranians were like, "Then we can sit down and talk about it," right? And no one is talking about limiting Iran's missile capabilities—their ballistic missiles or cruise missiles or elsewhere.

No one is talking anymore about how Iran must stop their support of Shia forces throughout the region—the Axis of Resistance, Hezbollah, Kataib Hezbollah, the Houthis, and so forth. No one... Those were all things that were mentioned as U.S. goals, along with, oh, I don't know, regime change—like said outright by the President of the United States and the Israeli government multiple times. In fact, Trump was even talking about how he was going to select the new Supreme Leader of Iran, right?

That it had to be someone agreeable to him, to the guy that he had a hand—certainly the largest hand—in killing. Uh, so, and when Trump is now afraid that the Iranians are targeting him for assassination, okay, so repeatedly there's been some kind of absolutely insane, completely counterfactual suggestion that has been presented by Trump and some of the most egregiously false people around him—that a couple of the previous attempted assassination attempts against him had something to do with Iran, when they quite clearly did not. I mean, there's like zero evidence. These are the domestic, you know, unhinged—or not so unhinged, depending on how you look at it—people who were involved in these efforts. It had absolutely nothing to do with Iran.

That said, if Iran were to try to assassinate Trump, I mean, that would be completely on board as far as I'm concerned, right? Quid pro quo. I mean, you take out their Supreme Leader, they have

every right to that amount of revenge as far as I'm concerned. But I don't believe that the Iranian government is actively attempting to do that. I'm saying they have the complete right to, but I actually think they've got far more pressing concerns right now than the orange man. So that's just more Trump background noise. But the Iranians, they see the control of the Strait of Hormuz as basically their birthright, handed to them to an extent by the U.S.-Israeli attacks on their country, because they had never exercised control over it before.

Everyone knew—everyone and their brother knew—that if Iran was attacked, and it was a serious enough attack, they would take control of the Strait of Hormuz, right, as part of their quote-unquote nuclear option. And everyone saw how effective it was. And basically, they view that as the price that the U.S., the West, the Gulf Arab states, and the world that uses the Strait have to pay because the U.S. and Israel attacked them and killed so many people and did so much damage to their country. And I don't know, it seems perfectly just to me. That's my reading of it.

And their control of the Strait of Hormuz has been identified by no less sources, even in the Western mainstream media, like The New York Times and others, as suggesting that in the aftermath of at least the first hot phase of the conflict, Iran was now kind of entering the ranks of the great powers of the world—maybe a junior member of the great powers—but joining the U.S. and China and Russia as a great power, principally because of their control over the Strait of Hormuz and their potential control, through their association with the Ansar Allah movement in Yemen, of the Bab al-Mandab Strait through the Red Sea as well. And that gave them unique geopolitical power and leverage moving forward that made them not just a regional power, but a great power as well. So, of course, they don't want to give that up.

#Danny

Well, can I ask a question, Mark, about the buildup here? Because there is, you know, as these threats are going on, and as Iran has simply given their answer to Donald Trump's ultimatum about Saturday's ultimatum—you better apologize and say that you're going to do everything we want with the Strait of Hormuz, open it all up. Well, there already are two aircraft carriers that have gotten closer and closer. They've entered the Gulf of Oman—the Abraham Lincoln and the George H.W. Bush. Sorry.

And a total of 20 warships behind them. And despite this, despite this, there is still nothing happening in the Omani corridor. Ever since those strikes on those tankers, that corridor has essentially been shut down. And Iran has said after this that they are demonstrating that only their authority will be the jurisdiction over the Strait of Hormuz—no one else's. And now they're having talks with Oman, which they are saying the U.S. is not participating in at all. So all of this is to say that that control of the Strait of Hormuz...

#Mark Sleboda

The U.S. is always in the room, Danny. Right. I mean, we know. Hi, guys. Right. We know you're in the room.

#Danny

But the control over the strait—it very much appears that that control over the strait is very firm. And that begs the question...

#Mark Sleboda

It doesn't take that much, as we pointed out before, right?

#Danny

What will these warships do then? Because what the U.S. had done, those 170 strikes or so, didn't open the Strait of Hormuz. It didn't cause Iran to say, okay, well, we'll back off.

#Mark Sleboda

The first two hot phases of the war didn't do it either.

#Danny

37 days of strikes. What was it? You know, thousands of strikes. Tens of—how many targets? You know, and—it's closed. So that means—and Mark, if you could just react to what that really means, because right now, of course, the markets, the global economy, it's all over the place with this. I don't think anybody is getting a real, genuine picture of what exactly the impact of this actually is, especially moving forward into the days and weeks ahead. But your thoughts about how the recent developments are still trying to threaten maybe even a renewed blockade against Iran over this. But it does feel like almost recycling when it comes to how the U.S.—we're definitely going back, because we're put right back in the situation that we were in before the memorandum of understanding.

#Mark Sleboda

Where the U.S. is really hesitant to go back to a hot phase of the war. Their air defense interceptor stockpiles—you know, the PAC-3 interceptors, but also the SM-3, the SM-6 for their naval forces, and THAADs, of course, even worse—are too low. They haven't been able to rebuild those. It takes two years, we found out in the last week, to build one PAC-3 interceptor. They have to be built by hand with parts from 400 different companies. It's absolutely absurd. So they don't make enough of them

a year—some 650 of them total for the entire Western world and their allies and vassal states that use that one lousy air defense system. They all need the Patriot interceptor. They're way too low on air defense interceptors.

#Danny

They're way too low on standoff munitions, right?

#Mark Sleboda

It's been admitted, whether we're talking the Tomahawk or the JASSM, right, which are really the only arrows in their quiver that are effective for standoff strikes against Iran. And we're repeatedly told, you know, within the Western media, how low those levels are. And again, how it will take them a decade to replenish their stockpiles and so forth. So that just leaves the U.S. with so few military options. It's obvious that they still need standoff munitions because every time they attempt to venture actually into Iranian airspace, they get smacked, right? And that's what led directly into the first ceasefire, right? The end of the hot phase of the war when so many U.S. ships attempted to enter Iranian airspace and so many of them got shot down as a result, right? So they don't have good military options.

There's no one who isn't a frothing neocon lunatic suggesting that there's any realistic scenario for a ground invasion of Iran. It would take, I don't know, 500,000 plus troops, maybe upwards of that. The U.S. just doesn't have the capacity or capability to do that in the modern day—certainly not without half a year of buildup to that. I mean, they can send forces, some Marines or, you know, an expeditionary unit on a suicide mission to seize control of Harg or Qeshm Island or something like that, but it would just get Americans killed. I mean, it would be absolutely suicidal. There's no way that, even if they could temporarily seize it, they wouldn't be under constant drone and missile and artillery and every other attack from the Iranians, with a substantial ground force of their own, upwards of 500,000 when you count in reserves.

#Danny

And I imagine, Mark, it would be very difficult to hide this. Unlike military bases, which are in regional countries far away, Iran can show that they're launching the missiles, but it would be up to the other side to show that there is actually impact being made. So we don't find out until satellites later. This would be far different. I think we would see this. It might be very possible for even Iran to demonstrate and show the world, since it is inside their country after all.

#Mark Sleboda

It would be very hard to ignore the pieces of Americans that would be coming back in flag-draped coffins. I know that they've probably downplayed casualties previously in this conflict, but they

wouldn't be able to do that. And Trump knows—Trump has waxed poetic about how he would like to seize control of Harg Island, and he believes that would give him complete control of all the spice, right? I mean, that's both the oil and the nuclear dust, you know, to use the Dune reference. But he didn't believe the American people had the stomach for it, meaning the casualties that would incur from it, clearly indicating that he would be just fine with it, and that's what he wants to do.

But he doesn't think that the American people would be behind him, which they almost certainly would not. I mean, they're not behind him now. You know, not that anyone in the U.S. government ever asks the American people what they think about foreign or military policy, right? That's not within the purview of Joe Public, shall we say. You don't really get a say there. But that said, he understands that he does have to get through, you know, midterm elections and everything else. And he doesn't want to be fighting impeachment for the next two years. So, you know, it's just not a serious military option.

If they do, I hope they do, because it will just hasten the end of U.S. hegemony to be smacked that way if they attempt to do that. To say nothing of—if you, let's say, took one of those islands and somehow were able to hide Americans in bunkers below the surface or something—how would you support them logistically through the Strait of Hormuz while being attacked by Iranian drones and aircraft and anti-ship missiles and their mini submarines and the USVs and everything else? It's just complete fantasy, right? It's one of those things that Trump talks about that have no military possibility of ever becoming reality except in the bloodiest, most catastrophic ways.

And we're told repeatedly over the last few weeks, right, the last couple of months, that Iran's missile fortress cities were able to endure those first two months of the hot phase of conflict, being hit repeatedly by U.S. and Israeli strikes and shrugging it off, that they just could not damage them, that they could temporarily block up some of the launch tunnels, but those were easily cleaned out. And then Iran would just resume their ability to punish the U.S., its bases, and the infrastructure of their Gulf allies, their vassals in the region, as well as Israel, because they just couldn't stop the Iranian missile strikes, the drone strikes.

And it was also admitted that Iran is perfectly capable, in their fortress cities, of at least to some level, some quantity, continuing to make missiles and drones, right? So that they can keep providing enough land trade. Land corridors, rail traffic, and everything were opened up through the north-south corridor with Russia, the Caspian Sea, through railways running through Turkmenistan to Iran, through Pakistan, that Iran was able to endure the U.S. blockade, such as it actually existed. And it was the U.S. who had to, in that geoeconomic game of chicken of those dueling blockades, it was the U.S. that had to swerve first.

Because their strategic petroleum reserves had gotten so critically low, that's what led to the U.S., you know, agreeing with their pinkies behind their back to the memorandum of understanding, you know, their fingers crossed. And quite obviously, they had no intention of fulfilling those terms, at least as the Iranians read the document. But the U.S. was like, yeah, we can twist it this way and

that way, and we don't actually have to follow through on most of this. And in the past two weeks, despite more oil getting to the global market and kind of, to a degree... I don't want to say resetting it because it didn't go that far, but resetting it enough, you know, to lower the price of oil a bit and so forth.

The U.S. has not been able to refill their strategic petroleum reserve. In fact, they are continuing to dump oil onto the global market right at this moment to prevent the oil price from spiking back up again. That's their continued manipulation of the oil market, and I'm almost sure that is one of the principal motivations in Trump making all this noise about negotiations and the Iranians wanting negotiations. This is more of his crude, but nonetheless fairly effective efforts, as he has shown again and again, to manipulate the oil markets by always promising peace or that a deal was right around the corner, repeatedly for the last two months. That has done a great deal to keep oil prices down. We saw it just a couple of weeks ago.

He initiated an attack after the markets closed on Friday and then declared the attacks were over before the markets reopened on Monday, not giving the markets a chance to react to this. So there's a great deal of market manipulation, and most of the actual oil experts that I have read who talk about this say that the price of oil should be considerably higher. But through the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, through Trump's manipulations with social media, and, by the way, through the Chinese oil policy—which has drastically reduced their imports in the past few months and has been spending out of their own reserves for their own domestic purposes—they have been, in effect, working hand in hand with the U.S. to prevent a massive oil spike because they fear that a global depression could lie at the end of it.

So that's an interesting complication in all of this. It doesn't mean that they support the U.S. It doesn't mean that they don't support Iran in the larger picture, but they don't want a global depression because that would, of course, upset their national interests far too much. They are an export-driven economy. They need that. So they've been actually taking very strong efforts in the past few months to also prevent a huge spike in oil. But there's only so much you can do with that. And we've seen the price of oil pick up again during the last week. And CENTCOM has been insisting that the U.S. has control of the Strait of Hormuz.

They even put out another of these ridiculous fact checks. Right. You know, they've gotten so much oil through, and you did last week when Iran was not putting its foot down and was allowing the U.S. —and maybe that was a mistake to do that—but they were allowing the U.S. to play its games in the southern corridor while the funeral of the supreme leader was going on, because quite obviously they didn't want to interrupt that. They put a higher value on the mourning process, particularly of someone they regard as a martyr, their supreme leader, and they didn't want to upset that.

And the U.S. was able to get a not insignificant amount of ships out through the southern corridor last week. But you're right, Danny, that since Iran last weekend—since the 7th, since the resumption of hostilities, since the day before that when Iran sent speedboats back into the Strait of Hormuz—

there have been practically no ships passing through the southern corridor of the Strait of Hormuz. I think I saw one on one day and so forth. So, you know, essentially, as you say, it's ground to a halt. And that tells us who has control. And Iran doesn't have to hit every single ship, right?

All they need to do is use their variety of options—drones, speedboats, anti-ship missiles, USVs, mini-sub. All they have to do is hit an occasional ship, and they don't even have to sink them, that are attempting to pass through the strait outside of their control without coordinating with them. Until the capitalist interests behind those tankers—you know, the owners, the corporations—the insurance costs go through the roof, right? They've at times referred to it as an insurance blockade. That's simply the prices for insurance of passing through without doffing the hat and kowtowing to the Iranians being simply too high.

The people, the corporations, the owners behind that, they don't want to risk their wealth, their assets that could be attacked. That's why it really doesn't take that much. And again, this has been admitted to by the Western mainstream media. It's even come out of the mouths of some U.S. officials that, hey, it really doesn't take that much for them to exercise control. So where does this put us back? I honestly don't know. The U.S. politically can't accept what's going on. Geo-economically, they can't return to that status quo for very long because their strategic petroleum reserves are out. What can they do?

Suicide mission ground up, more decapitation strikes, hoping that if they kill the right people this time, something different will happen. Emerge out of Iran some more subservient, I'm sorry, rational people? I don't think so. One of the interesting things that they did hit in these last couple of days of strikes is they started to move out away from just air defense and military infrastructure on Iran's southern coast, but they also started to hit some infrastructure. And I noticed that they hit a rail bridge that is part of Iran's trade through Turkmenistan that goes to the Belt and Road Initiative with China.

So that's, to me, clearly the U.S. recognizing that that was a problem for their blockade in the first place — how much Iran was able to get out via land corridors and so forth. So they obviously recognize that return to their blockade; that seems to be what they're doing, but it didn't work for them the first time. Now, a little side detail to talk about how effective their naval forces are. During the last week, they moved another Marine Expeditionary Force with the USS Boxer into the theater. But already, as of two days ago, we're told that the Boxer is dead in the water due to engine problems or something of the sort. So, I don't know, maybe they had another laundry fire. I hear those laundry fires are real devastating. As a former Navy guy, I can't say I remember Navy fires.

#Danny

You just weren't stopping.

#Mark Sleboda

But, you know, maybe something has changed in the past three decades.

#Danny

You weren't just careless.

#Mark Sleboda

Maybe, I don't know. Whatever they're running, those new... those Whirlpool machines.

#Danny

Those Whirlpool machines. They got them from... they learned from Russia. They were taking their parts from Russia.

#Mark Sleboda

Ridiculous propaganda and narrative. It's just a dark situation. It's a dark situation for Iran, for the world. But it's so absurd at some points. It's Kafkaesque.

#Danny

Yeah. So, Mark, when you were in the Navy, you weren't just setting things ablaze. You weren't just throwing clothing bombs into the washing machines to see what would happen.

#Mark Sleboda

I was going to say that, actually, I mean, you don't wash your own clothes on a ship, right? I mean, there is an entire division, you know, a department of people whose job is to wash everyone's clothes on the ship. And usually, they know what they're doing with the washing machine.

#Danny

Maybe they really wanted to go home. Oh, man. Well, you know, some of the manipulation too, Mark, is—I think what's happened now with the oil markets in particular is that there has now been so much manipulation that—because, I mean, it's oil markets, we're talking about some of the nastiest monopolies, all about their money. Now they look at Trump's whims and what he says, and it's just, you know, I feel like what we're seeing is until something major, drastic happens, there's just no trust in a word from Donald Trump, whether it's on one side with talks or aggression.

Like, even just look at this. Like, total misdirection. He gave this deadline to Iran as he said, OK, Iran, do what I say publicly. Get on your knees and say you're going to open the Strait of Hormuz. Then he's talking all this about a thousand missiles ready to hit Iran if they kill me. And I told

everyone in the Pentagon to make sure that they fire them and that they ultimately get these thousands of missiles to immediately fall on their heads. For an extended, for a one-year period of time, right?

Like, even this feels like misdirection, and that, uh, there's, you know, uh, even this time around, there wasn't much manipulation of the market per se. But I think the market is not really responding to what now seems to be what the United States is doing, which is—they even said it to CNN—they said, well, strike, pause. It's almost, they say, it's like an approach, a strategy, if you will: strike Iran for a little, and then pull back. I don't even know if I think of that as a strategy, and more so, they're just trying to save those missiles, because they're obviously firing off long-range standoff missiles, correct? I mean, if not, we would have seen air defenses... Yes.

#Mark Sleboda

They're not firing... They're not using JDAMs. They're not using something. They have more. They still have to use standoff munitions, right? So... The markets, right, they are an emotional, not logical construct, right? Creature, if you want to call it. And they have been poked and prodded and pushed and pulled, you know, like Play-Doh or, you know, one of these elastic things, slime toys or whatever, that are pulled in one direction and then the other, then back and forth and pushed so much in the last couple of months that, quite frankly, they don't even know what the hell's going on.

#Danny

They...

#Mark Sleboda

I have to say that whatever geopolitical risk consultants are advising the people with the money who make those market decisions on oil futures, they're doing a lousy job. Because the way they've been reacting ridiculously to every other thing Trump says—one direction, then the other. But there's a degree of exhaustion. That's what I'm getting from the markets at this point. They're like, move! And we're like, they don't even know which way to turn at this point. They don't want a worst-case scenario. That's not what they want to happen. But, you know, we're on that precipice again of a potential worst-case scenario. And that worst-case scenario is Iran keeps the Strait of Hormuz, you know, largely shut down again, except perhaps some selective traffic that they may let through, that they continue to allow through.

And they shut down the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. And then, if you want to get even worse, if things escalate again, they could take shots at some of the Gulf states, bypass infrastructure like the East-West pipeline across Saudi to the Red Sea, the UAE's Fujairah pipelines and ports, and these other things that have allowed them to get some oil out during the last few months. That could be shut down. Iran has the ability to reach out and smack those. And then that's it. They have all the cards

in terms of further asymmetric steps up the escalation ladder. They just have all of the leverage there. And the U.S. has what? Fire some more standoff munitions? Yeah. I mean, they wrecked the maritime traffic tower in Chabahar.

#Danny

I saw that.

#Mark Sleboda

But is that going to make the Iranian government roll over, show Trump their belly, and act like Mark Rutte? No, I don't think it is.

#Danny

That would be, you know, that would be a total flip, you know, that would be a huge dive. But yeah, I mean, Mark, the fact is, even with the example of the funeral, what happened there, and then Mojtaba Khamenei's comments, those are totally aligned and linked. So Iran has all of these escalation cards. They also have a population that would be cheering on an escalation and willing.

#Mark Sleboda

That are literally calling for vengeance.

#Danny

Willing to take it.

#Mark Sleboda

Against Trump and Netanyahu, chanting in the streets yesterday.

#Danny

And to take the sacrifices, too. I don't think we're seeing—we're not seeing riots in the streets about the end of the oil waiver sanctions, for example, or any of that, or whatever economic pain that might cause. We're not seeing any demands otherwise, other than to take that revenge. So, uh, ultimately, Mark, there's that element too—the United States has a fatigued population. It is not in agreement with this war. It doesn't love the economic consequences of it. Of course, U.S. elites don't care about what Americans think, but at a certain level, uh, and eventually, especially with electoral cycles, it will bear out political consequences should this thing drag on.

#Mark Sleboda

Yeah, even if not directly, right? Simple things like, eventually it will have an effect on inflation in the U.S. and the price of gas at the pumps. And that is how all the Americans—the Americans will hear, “Oh, okay, we're bombing some other country that we couldn't be bothered to try and find on a map again,” as well. And I'm not talking about you guys out there watching this. You know that you're the self-educated few who actually care about geopolitics and foreign policy. You are well aware that you are the exception to the rule of the American populace that doesn't care about those things. But economically, the pocketbook issues come through at the end. You can't offset those forever, so eventually it will have an effect, and it will have that inevitable knockdown effect on the things that Americans actually do vote on—and, you know, demonstrably, historically so.

#Danny

Yeah, yeah. And then in the last five minutes, Mark, your thoughts on this—you know, we just had the NATO summit, we had promises—well, not promises—we had Donald Trump say, “Ukraine, go produce those Patriot missiles.” Then Russia just gave a little love tap to Kiev overnight with, what was it, eight or ten Iskander missiles and maybe a hundred drones. But they all hit their targets. And already the Ukrainian-aligned media is saying eleven people are dead from these attacks. Mark, 5,000 drones that Russia's defense ministry is saying they have downed by the Ukrainians in recent weeks. What? This feels like Russia and Iran. It does feel like the United States, being behind both of these conflicts, has absolutely no way to affect an outcome favorable to it, and the only thing left is to just continue onward. That does not seem like a very delicious outcome.

#Mark Sleboda

No, they're beating their head against the wall, doing the same thing over and over again—the very definition of madness—because they have no other options. So, yeah, I'm actually told that Trump handed Zelensky three licenses. He gave him one license saying, “I'm going to give you the license to produce the Patriot, the PAC-3 Interceptors, on your own. So you won't complain anymore that we can't provide you with them.” He also provided him with the license to make the Death Star, so that they can just make the Death Star and settle the Russians on their own. And he also gave him the license to produce pretty little pink unicorns—so, you know, for the kids, I guess, and those who are inclined to such things. Because those three fantasies are all about equivalent. The U.S. can't even produce more than 650 Patriot Interceptors a year at the moment.

#Mark Sleboda

Much less the Europeans. We talked about, again, the details—two years of missiles, 400 different companies involved in making the parts and components and resources that go into building them, artisanally made by hand, like some kind of millennial hipsters instead of through an actual factory industrial process—under fire from Russia continually as they are. No, I mean, everyone knows that that's not possible. The U.S. does appear to be showing alarm, and along with the Europeans, right?

Most of it is done now through the CIA, so it's less visible. But, you know, again, they've openly admitted that the U.S. is behind all of this, right?

Through their targeting, through U.S. intelligence and aircraft, they are directing the Kiev regime's drone attacks. And they keep getting bigger. I believe that the Europeans have amassed a significant stockpile of drones for a protracted campaign over the last few months. And that is the one thing that their military-industrial complex has been able to ramp up, really on their own. What they're doing is buying Chinese components. They can't buy them directly from the Chinese because the Chinese won't allow that, but they buy them through second and third parties. You know, the Chinese sell them to Malaysia, Malaysia sells them to the Philippines, and then the Philippines sends them to the Europeans. It causes them some markup.

But that's how they're able to put together so many long-range strike drones. But one understands that these long-range drones, because they have to travel so far and, shall we say, are not, you know, premium-quality machines, right? It's, you know, put together from Chinese parts essentially. They actually carry very small warheads; they're only able to do limited damage. Russian air defense has just done an absolutely incredible job, proving that they have by far and above the best integrated, interconnected, multi-layered air and missile defense and electronic warfare shield in the world. That said, they have the largest country in the world, and you can't protect everything. For instance, they have repelled numerous multi-hundred attacks on Moscow again over the last few weeks without being able to reproduce any significant kerosene-filled smoke plumes or Hollywood effects like they did a couple of weeks ago.

But the last two nights, they did really hit relatively undefended commercial traffic on the Sea of Azov pretty hard, hitting a number of ships, ferries, and cargo ships. And this is NATO, right? They're finding where the weak holes are. And they have begun, "We have to stop the Russians. Donbass is about to fall, and we can't let the Russians go." And the Russians are not showing any signs of agreeing to end this conflict on our terms. So they recognize that they can't stop the Russians on the battlefield, no matter how much they pump into the Kiev regime at this point.

Not that they have much left, and not that the regime has the manpower. But now they're going to bank everything on a renewed long-range strike campaign, largely with drones. Maybe they'll be able to work up a few missiles more effective than the Flamingo, you know, over the next few months in there. But they say right openly they want to force Russia to the negotiation table—meaning to the negotiation table on their terms, on their surrender terms, where NATO then puts troops in Ukraine and everything else. That's not going to happen. Russia hasn't gone five years; they will agree to no ceasefire. I believe that was an Iranian mistake, but you know, it's quite clear that Russia is not going to have another Minsk. They're not going to agree to a ceasefire.

All of this is background noise—some localized gasoline problems because refineries have been hit. But even that is with context, because the way the Russian refining segment of their economy is set up is they have a lot of surge and spare capacity. They have the most resilient in the world, and

that's been admitted to. But it's geared up to produce primarily diesel, because that's what the military uses, right? And then some refined oil products primarily for export. But the Russian refining actually only barely makes what they need domestically in terms of gasoline. That's kind of a weak point that they've identified—the West has identified. It's not unusual during high-traffic summer months, because of summer travel, for Russia to import gasoline during the summer, right?

It's normal. That's the way they set up the economy. Now, NATO—who, of course, is behind these attacks, you know, the CIA, the European powers, right—they've identified this weakness, and they want to bring the war home to the Russian people to cause them trouble and pain and suffering, thinking that will force the Russian government to stop what they're doing. That's this whole thing. So that, and some panic buying, has created temporary logistical problems. Russia is having to import some gasoline to try to calm the domestic marketplace down, but it's not going to make them stop any more than they're going to get the Iranian people to turn on the Iranian government in this situation. In both conflicts, they've overextended themselves.

They've pushed themselves further than their power. They're not capable of achieving in either situation what both sides regard as existential conflicts for them. And in both Iran and the U.S., not just the political elite, but the domestic political situation is that in both countries, the population can endure much higher levels of suffering and deprivation than the U.S. might seek to inflict on them—certainly more than the U.S. population is willing to accept in terms of inflation and other things. And one of the things with Russia cutting out exports of gasoline—they've stopped exports not only of gasoline to the world market but diesel as well. And right away, The Economist and other Western media sources are asking, what is Russia doing cutting off diesel, because there's already a diesel crisis in the world.

And they're not short of diesel. Why are they cutting off diesel? Because now that's hurting our economies too, since we're reliant on Russian exports of diesel, especially right now. And they're freaking out over this, saying it's a Russian plot to try to force us. Well, I don't know. You're trying to force their hand economically by making their people suffer with tens of thousands of sanctions. I think there might be other reasons, you know, like Russia making sure there aren't similar spikes in diesel and so forth. Not that there's any sign of that. But if it is Russia's intention to say, "You want to play dirty with us? We can play dirty with you. Enjoy higher diesel prices in your country," while Russia isn't suffering from a shortage of diesel.

Because that's what their refining industry is designed to do. And if you stress 10% to 20% of that refining market down for some temporary repairs, Russia still has plenty of diesel. But they have to import a little bit of gasoline temporarily to smooth out the domestic concerns. But we're in that. The U.S. is now left with—militarily—they can't defeat Russia in Ukraine. They can't defeat Iran directly. And now they're left with trying to hit both of those countries' populations directly, to achieve through what can be called political terror what they could not achieve militarily on the battlefield. And that's not a sign of strength. That is a sign of global geopolitical weakness. We have reached the limits of American hard power on multiple levels in both of these conflicts now.

#Danny

Yeah. Very well said, Mark. Um, I want to make sure—well, first I just want to say, uh, maybe to close that, uh, this political terror campaign on both the Iranian and Russian populations—generally, when the United States fights forever wars, it's because they want to—the military-industrial complex, for example, wants to make profits, the politicians, whatever, all the various reasons why you need a forever war. You might be fighting a forever war if you're the U.S. Empire against Russia and Iran if the calculation is to try to starve or force their populations to capitulate to them. They might be waiting quite a long time for that.

#Mark Sleboda

Let me just speak for the Russians and the Iranians and quote the great American actor Bruce Campbell: "Give me some sugar, baby."

#Danny

I want to thank everyone. First, I want to thank Mark here. After the program, his Boosty account is in the video description below. That's where you can find all of his work. Support him if you're able to, so be sure to do that after. Hit the like button before you head out because that will help boost the show in the algorithm, and more people can both hear Mark and also check out his Boosty. I want to thank everyone who gave a super chat today. Thanks to all of you. I'm pulling you up on the screen now. Thank you so much for those. And thanks to all the moderators and all of the viewers. Thanks to the moderators for your hard work and the viewers for making the show possible. Mark, do you have any final words for the audience before we head out of here?

#Mark Sleboda

Nope. You know, have a good weekend. We'll endure here in Moscow, and I know they're going to endure there in Tehran. We'll see you on the other side.

#Danny

Yeah, we'll have to see. That deadline is just a couple of hours away now after we head out of here. We have to see how Donald Trump and his administration, CENTCOM, all of them react. Hit the like button before you go. Tomorrow I'll be back at 1 p.m. Eastern Time, July 12th. I'll announce what's going on in a bit. All right, everyone.