



## **Former Marine Corps Intelligence officer & UN Weapons Inspector Scott Ritter on the Ukraine War**

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you guys for tuning in today and welcome to another episode of The Source. I'm your host, Zain Raza. And today I'll be talking to Scott Ritter about the geopolitical and military developments in the war in Ukraine. Scott Ritter is a former US Marine Corp intelligence officer and [former] United Nations Special Commission's weapons inspector. As a weapons inspector, he was tasked to oversee the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq from 1991 to 1998, a post from which he later resigned. He's also the author of several books, the latest being "Disarmament in the Time of Perestroika".

**ZR:** Scott Ritter, thank you so much for your time today.

**Scott Ritter (SR):** Well, thanks for having me.

**ZR:** For our German viewers, as well as our younger viewers, I want to begin with your biography. You resigned in protest when you were a UN weapons inspector and also became a vocal critic of the Iraq war, as well as the general US foreign policy in the Middle East. Could you talk about your background working for the US and the UN and what eventually changed your perspective?

**SR:** Sure. I was the son of a military family. My father was a career Air Force officer. And my mom was an Air Force nurse. And I was raised all over the world. I went to high school in Hawaii, Turkey and Germany. Graduated from Kaiserslautern American High School in Germany in 1979- giving away my age... You know, when you grow up in that environment, remember, this is during the Cold War, West Germany at the time was on the front line of the Cold War, and it was all around us. I mean, when you grew up and tanks were or on the road all the time, aircraft were flying overhead, helicopters. It was a nation prepared for conflict.

That conflict was going to be fought against the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. So when I graduated, I, like a lot of patriotic young Americans, joined the military. I initially went into the Army and decided the Army wasn't for me. I went in the Marine Corps because I wanted a little bit more of a challenge and I wanted to be around guys who were as committed as I was about destroying the enemy through firepower maneuver, which is the Marine Corps mission. I graduated college. I had a degree in Russian history, took a little bit of Russian language, and then I went to the Marine Corps and started to train to do my job. I was on 29 Palms, California, spent two and a half years perfecting the art of delivering artillery shells with precision on to a Soviet target in a maneuver warfare environment. Fortunately, I never got an opportunity to use that skill against the Soviets because that would have been a very deadly war.

But instead, in 1987, I was drafted by the Department of Defense to be a part of something called the On-Site Inspection Agency, a new group that was created after Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev signed the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. Anybody who I think Germans know about the history of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty and how it relates to them. The giant protests that erupted in Germany in the early 1980s that actually overthrew a German government and caused it to collapse and what it meant to have American nuclear weapons on their territory and Soviet nuclear weapons targeting their territory. Had there been a war between NATO and the Soviet in Germany would no longer exist, it would be literally a radioactive wasteland. And so this treaty was designed to get rid of those weapons. And I am actually proud of the fact that I was the first inspector on the ground in the Soviet Union. I spent two years from June 1988 until July of 1990, actively participating in the implementation of the INF treaty. This is important in a number of ways, one that is exposed me to arms control. I was a marine. Now all I want to do is kill Russians. And after that, I was somebody who recognized that probably the better option was to peacefully coexist with Russia in a non-nuclear environment. So I learned about arms control and the importance of arms control. But perhaps more critically, I learned about on site inspection. In fact, I helped write the book. Prior to that, nobody had ever done it. And so as the first inspector on the ground as one of the first people to implement the on site inspection tasks of the INF treaty, we literally wrote the book.

Like everything, jobs end especially in the military, and I had to go back to the Marine Corps in the summer of 1990. Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August of 1990, and I found myself caught up in the preparations for that war. I was assigned to a special planning staff attached to the commandant of the Marine Corps to plan combat operations. I was a very junior officer at the time, but I did a good enough job to impress the commandant so that he sent me to Saudi Arabia. I was part of General Schwarzkopf's staff. But instead of getting to fight the war that I was trained to fight against an enemy, my experience as a missile inspector came back to haunt me. Because during the Gulf War, one of the great threats that emerged was the Iraqi Scud missile, which is a Soviet missile. The Iraqis had it modified to longer range and were firing against Israel and targets in the Arabian Peninsula. The Israeli

targeting was especially worrisome because if Israel entered the war, it could break up the coalition that the President, George Herbert Walker Bush, had built with Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Syria and other Muslim nations. So we had to keep Israel out of the war, which means we had to find a way to stop the Scud missiles from being launched. And I became heavily involved in that activity. Long story short, we didn't stop a single Iraqi Scud missile from being launched. We didn't shoot down a single Iraqi Scud missile, even though we won Desert Storm by evicting Iraq from Kuwait, we lost the missile war. Iraq won that. They were not able to get Israel to intervene but we were not successful in taking out Iraq's missiles. And I played a very important role in the intelligence assessments that made that conclusion. That was not a popular conclusion, I have to tell you. People like to believe that we actually killed these missiles, but we didn't.

When the war ended, I had a decision to make. I could stay in the Marine Corps. I had a great reputation as an intelligence officer. I had a good record, a solid record. As a captain, I had done things at the national level in wartime and as an inspector, my name was known at the highest levels, and I probably could've had a very good career, but I fought my war. And the reason why I joined the military was to go to war against the Soviets. The Cold War was over. The Soviets were now our friends. And I just felt like having served my country in war, I probably didn't need to stay in the Marine Corps, maybe pursue less violent professions. And so I actually was recruited by H. J. Heinz to go over to the Soviet Union and install factories, food processing factories, as a country manager. But in August of 1991, that dream went away with the coup. Because of the coup, H. J. Heinz withdrew from their Soviet project and I was unemployed.

Fortunately for me, the United Nations had determined back in April that Iraq needed to be disarmed of its weapons of mass destruction programs in the aftermath of the Gulf War. They passed a resolution 687 calling for disarmament. They created an entity called the United Nations Special Commission. Originally, the special commission was comprised of what I call gentleman inspectors, people who would operate like we did in the INF Treaty, based upon the declaration, you would come in and verify the declaration, then you would inspect that would have been declared to ensure that it has been disposed of properly. But it became clear early on that Iraq had not declared brutality of its system. They under-declared chemical weapons. They under-declared the ballistic missiles. They didn't declare a biological or nuclear weapons program. In the summer of 1991, weapons inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency were successful in exposing the Iraqi lies about their nuclear weapons program. And we had concerns about their ballistic missile program. So again, my reputation as an intelligence officer with arms control and onsite inspection experience and my wartime experience hunting Scuds, I was brought into the United Nations to create an intelligence unit that was going to be focused on initially finding out what happened to Iraq's ballistic missiles. And that job expanded. I did a good job. We compelled the Iraqis in March of 1992 to admit they were lying. They declared the missiles that they had held on to. We did the investigation and I became a central figure. You know people always say, "Well, how did

somebody of your background get involved in this?" And I told you how I got involved. "But then how do you become a chief weapons inspector?" Because you're expecting to hear that I'm some sort of rocket scientist or I'm a chemist or a biologist or a nuclear physicist. I'm none of those. I am a simple marine, as simple as it gets. But sometimes you need that. You see, leadership abhors a vacuum, and the United Nations was involved in creating something it had never created before, and it had no bench. There was no expertise either in the intelligence field or the inspection field, because I was one of the people that wrote the book about onsite inspection. I basically got involved in a very unique thing. Normally when you do missions of this nature, you have intelligence people who collect information, assess information, and then they prepare that information and give it to the operations people who receive it and then decide how they're going to do things. And then when they do it, the intelligence people collect that, bring it back, assess it. And there's this relationship. I became the one stop shop. I was the intelligence. I collected it. I've been around the world. I had relationships with the senior most intelligence officials of the British government, the American government, the German government, the Dutch government, the Jordanians, the Israelis, on and on and on to gather this information. And then I would be the guy put in charge of inspecting. I would build the inspection team and then go in and do the inspection, gather that information and come back and start the process all over. And I did that for seven years at the highest levels. And I was very successful along with my colleagues. We did a good job.

The problem is the US government didn't want us to do a good job. The US government wanted to keep economic sanctions in place against Iraq, and the only way they could keep them in place against Iraq was maintaining the perception that Iraq was not complying with its obligations. So the closer we came to saying, "Hey, it's all over, Iraq is disarmed", the more the United States viewed us as the enemy, not Iraq. The United States job was regime change getting rid of Saddam Hussein. And by 1998, it became painfully obvious that one that was being used for purposes that the Security Council didn't support. In March of 1998, I was tasked with carrying out an inspection designed to provoke a war. Literally, we went to the White House, we went to the State Department, and they said, "We want you, Scott Ritter, to go in and create the conditions to start a war. We want you to inspect the Ministry of Defense." I attended a meeting at the US ambassador's office. Bill Richardson was the ambassador. Richard Butler was the chief executive of the special commission. I was the chief inspector designation. There was a CIA official, State Department official there. And they all sat there on the whiteboard and said, "Ritter, we need to go in and start a confrontation on this date so we can begin bombing on this date." And I was like, "Well, what I can guarantee that I can do is I can go in and start an inspection on this date." What happens after that? It's not my job. I'm supposed to do an inspection. But the Iraqis had said that if you try to inspect the Ministry of Defense, it will be war. So it was automatically assumed that they sent me and by that time I was the most aggressive inspector in the United Nations arsenal, a man that the Iraqis called Abu Azimut, the father of all crises, hated and reviled in Iraq. They didn't want to cooperate with me. If you send me to the Ministry of Defense,

you're going to get a war. That's something you could go to Las Vegas to get about 100% odds on. Well, I went there and I told the Iraqis and they stopped us. They said, "We're not letting in" and I said, "You do know what the consequences are." They said yes. And I said, "No, you don't. The consequences are you're all going to die. It's over. The missiles are going to come in. All of this is going to be destroyed. You're going to die. You're going to die. You're going to die. And for what I said, you know me. You don't like me. But you know, I'm an honest guy. When I tell you that I want to get in there to look for only documents that pertain to potential weapons of mass destruction activity, you know that's the truth because I've been to your intelligence headquarters and I've done the same thing. I've been to Presidential sites and I've done the same thing. You know, when I say I'm going to do it, I do it, I do nothing more. Let me in and let me do my job. We don't have to go to war". They let me in. I did my job and we didn't go to war. Now the Iraqis were happy. The United States government was not. They started shutting down my operations, preventing me from being able to do my job. And so I resigned in August of 1998 out of frustration of the American interference in the inspection process. And since that time, I've been a vocal critic of American policy. And don't get me wrong, when I see a vocal critic. It doesn't mean I'm anti-American. I'm the most pro-American person you're ever going to meet. I love my country, but my country is defined by the Constitution, not by a government. The country is defined by the ideals and principles enshrined in the Constitution. The policies of the government that are perverting these constitutional values. So it's my duty and obligation as a patriotic American to speak out when I see my country doing something bad, because that's the only way we're going to fix it. That's the only way we're going to live up to the standards we set for ourselves. And so if an American says they love their country, it's their job to fix their country because it's their country. My country is broke. My job is to help fix it. That's why I do what I do.

**ZR:** You already mentioned the INF treaty, and that was actually going to be my next question. The United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, the INF Treaty in 2019, Open Skies Treaty in 2020. You've already mentioned your background, your unique insights. Can you talk about these treaties? Because they are rarely, if at all, mentioned when it comes to addressing US -Russian relations and also the backdrop of the Ukraine war. Could you talk about these treaties in detail and their significance?

**SR:** Sure. Let's just start with the concept of disarmament and arms control first. The United States developed the atomic bomb first. We had a monopoly initially. And the reason why we dropped the bomb on Japan, a lot of people don't know this and they're like [they believe], Oh, we had to do it to break the will of the Japanese. The Japanese were going to surrender and we knew that. Truman knew it. All the leadership knew it. We dropped a bomb on Japan to send a signal to the Soviets that, hey, we got the bomb and you guys need to stop spreading your - you know, we thought they were going to be moving all throughout Europe and threatening everything. They weren't, but we were threatening them. Then the Soviets got the bomb. Well, now we say, Okay, you got it but when we planned war with them, we always

planned on using nuclear weapons. In the 1950s, we were planning on, if we go to war, we're going to drop this many bombs on this many Russian cities. And we expected they would try to bomb American cities. And that's just the way it was. But then we reached a threshold and went beyond simply destroying some cities to destroying nations, as if the world is going to end. When John F Kennedy, when he became President, he was briefed on what's called the Single Integrated Operational Plan, the SIOP. And he was briefed on it because he's the commander in chief. He's the guy that has to push the button to make it happen. And he said, "Wait a minute, the only option I have is to destroy the world." They said, "Yes, sir." He said, "That's not good enough. I can't. You need to give me other options. It can't just be to destroy the world." And they came back and gave him other options and it was, start this way, but we will always end up destroying the world. And he walked out saying, "And we call ourselves the human race." I mean, how stupid and insane is this. And every President after him has been briefed on this said the same thing. This is crazy. John F Kennedy was so alarmed by this that he said we have to, especially after the Cuban missile crisis, on a program of arms control with the Russians to control this arms race that's spinning out of control. It created something called the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency Act (ACDA) under the State Department, which had responsibility for formulating this.

And the reason I bring this up is that arms control was built into the national security mindset of America from the very start, even as we developed as a nuclear power. Arms control was always there, and we were striving for arms control. And in 1972, the United States and Soviet Union signed a treaty called the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Now, the importance of this treaty is one, it's the first time we signed a major arms control treaty of this nature. And two, is what it said. It basically said you're not allowed to defend yourself against nuclear attack, that we're not going to bankrupt ourselves building missile defenses, that A) won't work and B), artificially create this notion of of safety and security behind which we could then launch an attack against the Soviet Union and they can launch an attack against us. By stripping these systems away, we said basically it's mutually assured destruction or madness. If we launch, you launch, we all die, therefore, we're not going to launch. You're not going to launch. Nobody's going to launch. Once we recognized that nuclear war cannot be fought because it's the end of everything, then we got down to the business of reducing the arsenals. Starting with limitations. We have to stop the massive growth of weapons. So the first real arms control talks were called Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) and we passed SALT 1 in the early 1970s, and we negotiated SALT 2 in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused Jimmy Carter to withdraw for ratification of SALT 2 but we had a process. But more important than the process, we had people who were dedicated to the task of disarmament. To give you an example of how important this is. A guy named Paul Nitze back in the early 1950s promulgated something called NSC 68, which is the containment strategy. So he was a Cold War guy who basically wrote the strategy of containing the Soviet Union. Basically, the document defines the Cold War. But in the early 1980s, he was the chief negotiator for the intermediate nuclear forces. He's the guy that sat down with the Soviets, not because he loved him, not because of some sort of liberal woke

guy. He's a hardcore conservative who came up with the idea of containment but he realized that in order to survive, we needed to get rid of these weapons. He had a famous walk in the woods, a walk in the park with his Soviet counterpart, where they discussed options. Even though the options didn't materialize, it set in motion the notion that we can work with these people. And we did sign the INF Treaty and in 1987 began implementation and in 1988 to remove the entire category of weapons that threatened Europe and the world with imminent nuclear destruction. So between the ABM Treaty, which created the concept of mutually assured destruction and the INF Treaty, which got rid of the immediate threat of nuclear destruction, we were on the road for strategic arms reduction, bringing the arsenals down and hopefully eventually eliminating the threat posed by nuclear weapons to global survival. That's the path we were on.

Then the Cold War ended. The Soviet Union collapsed and America instead of emerging as someone that said, how do we continue this process? Said, We're the world's sole remaining superpower and instead of using arms control to reduce our power, we're going to use arms control to promote our power, to reinforce our power. And from that moment on, we perverted the cause of arms control, seeking unilateral advantage over anybody who would negotiate, especially the Russians. Ask the Russians about START 2, START 3, SORT, NEW START all these treaties. They were not negotiated by the United States to have mutual reduction. They were negotiated to reduce the Russians while maintaining a strategic advantage for the United States. That's the whole mind set of these treaties. And the Russians know that but they were weak back in the 90s and in the 2000s. They needed American economic assistance and help. So they they allowed these treaties to be ratified and implemented, hoping that the United States would help them get back on their feet but that's not what the United States wanted. The United States wanted to keep Russia down. The policy of the United States in the 1990s and early 2000s was to promote the economic and political collapse of Russia so that Russia would disintegrate into various fiefdoms. We didn't like this big Russian federation. It looked too much like the Soviet Union. We needed to break it down. We need needed Chechnya stripped away. We need the Northern Caucasus stripped away, Buryatia, Tatars, we need everybody to break away and have several entities, not a singular entity. And then we could dominate all of them because we never wanted Russia to rise up and confront us again as an equal like the Soviet Union did. Unfortunately for us, the corrupt Yeltsin regime went away, replaced by a guy named Vladimir Putin, who wasn't going to play that game. Long story short, Putin said, "No, we're going to fight to not only survive as the Russian Federation, but get back on our feet, not to confront you or attack you, just to be ourselves, to be the level Russia deserves to be as a world power, not the world power, we are not trying to compete with the United States but we are a world power." And from that moment on, the United States has had a policy of how to get rid of Vladimir Putin. It's a regime change policy. It's been in place from the earliest days. It became an act of regime change policy under Barack Obama when Michael McFaul came up with the Russian reset, it's a fancy way of saying regime change. It was: Let's keep Dmitry Medvedev as President so that we can control him like we did Boris Yeltsin and keep Vladimir Putin out.

Prevent him from returning. See Putin constituted two terms as President. The Constitution prohibited a third term. So he switched places with Medvedev. He became prime minister and later he became President. And what we want to do is keep that permanent and then just get rid of Putin. Didn't work out that way. Putin ran for office again, became President. And from that moment on, we said he's got to go. And everything we did was designed to remove him and how we were going to remove him by using Ukraine as a vehicle to create a confrontation that would lead to the economic and political collapse of Russia so that Putin would be removed from power.

We started in 2008. William Burns, then the US ambassador, wrote a memorandum saying If you invite Ukraine in [to NATO], it will lead to the inevitable military intervention of Russia to Ukraine. So we knew: Invite Ukraine, Russia will invade eventually. We knew the cause and effect relationship. We then invited Ukraine later on in that year, knowing that by doing that we are setting up a Russian military intervention. People keep saying that the Russian invasion last February was an unprovoked act of aggression. Guys, I'm telling you right now, the United States provoked it by inviting Ukraine. We knew what was going to happen. And then we further promoted this by holding the coup in Ukraine to get rid of the pro-Russian constitutionally, elected [Prime Minister] Viktor Yanukovich and replace him with a government that was dominated by militant, ultra nationalist white supremacist, neo-Nazis who worship Stepan Bandera, a Hitler supporting thug murderer that became the national hero of Ukraine. And this force then turned around in April of that year 2014, declared war on ethnic Russians, literally declared war on ethnic Russian, said, "We are in an anti-terrorism operation against ethnic Russians, in the Donbas." This led to a conflict that led to a peace initiative, the Minsk Accords. But we now know the Minsk Accords weren't designed for peace. They were designed to buy time so NATO could build an Ukrainian army capable of defeating the Russians and the Donbas, which we did. We, the United States and NATO did for eight years. When Russia said that they were compelled to act because of the preemptive self-defense, Russia is 100% correct. That's how we got to the Ukraine conflict. It's about regime change. There's a guy named Kenneth Rogoff. He's a Harvard professor, he just spoke in Davos a week or so ago, and he just straight up said the whole sanctioning program that we imposed when Russia moved into Ukraine, the purpose of that was regime change. He said it straight up regime change. The sanctions are designed to collapse the Russian economy so that the Russian people rise up and remove [Putin]. What are we doing in Ukraine? The whole policy of the military intervention in Ukraine is not to get the Ukrainians to win, but to so demoralize Russia and weaken Russia that the people will rise up. We failed. The economic sanctions have backfired. Europe is suffering, not Russia. And on the military side, Russia is on the verge of winning this war, not losing this war. So the regime policy failed, but we continue to pursue that policy. That is what the United States objective is with regards to Russia - regime change.

**ZR:** I would like to make some counter arguments that are usually made in this case, and if you could address them. The argument usually follows that Ukraine is an independent and



sovereign state and has a right to make deals with anyone it pleases, including with NATO or the United States. How would you respond to this argument?

**SR:** Well, I think that the response to that is - that is true but nations also have an inherent right of self-defense and you have to respect the historical reality of the role played by Ukraine. When the United States under RAND Corporation publishes a paper that recognizes that if you strip Ukraine away from the Russian sphere of influence, you destroy Russia and therefore you are stripping Ukraine away for the purpose of destroying Russia, Russia has an inherent right to say, No, you're not going to do that. Ukraine says, Yes, we are a sovereign state. But Ukraine, once they become a party to a strategy designed to destroy Russia, becomes the enemy of Russia. As I said, you're a sovereign nation, but when you buy into a policy direction that allows outsiders to use you as a proxy to wage war against Russia, then you become a combatant. And, you know, sovereignty doesn't matter when you go to war. When you lose the war, you lose your sovereignty. And that's what's happened here. Ukraine made a decision to engage Russia by only militarily as part of an overall strategy of destroying Russia and Russia has responded in a manner that's going to cost Ukraine a lot of its territory, already has maybe more, and it's going to cost Ukraine. You know that which makes it a nation. I don't know what is going to exist of Ukraine when this is done. But history has shown many nations who claim to be sovereign nations when they embarked on suicidal policy paths no longer exist. And that may be the future of Ukraine.

**ZR:** Also, another argument that is made about the role of NATO. Some argue NATO's role is of defensive, in nature, protecting democracy and liberty. NATO has been stationed on the Russian borders, for example, in Latvia and Poland and as far as we know, there was no invasion of Russia planned from there. What do you make of this argument in the context of the role of NATO's? Do you agree with it?

**SR:** When it was formed, it was a defensive alliance and Article five was all anything everybody talked about. Article five, of course, is the collective self-defense article of NATO - An attack against one is an attack against us all. It's not that, by the way. It's an attack against one means everybody gets to think about whether or not they want to intervene. During the Cold War, there was a consensus that NATO would intervene. In fact, NATO had a standing military force ready to respond immediately to any Soviet attack. That has gone away in the aftermath. What we do know is that there were promises made to former President of the Soviet Union Gorbachev that the reunification of Germany, it came about after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, that NATO promised that it would not expand one square inch, meaning that it wouldn't go into Eastern Europe and that promise was assumed to be the same for all of the Warsaw Pact when they went away. But as Secretary James Baker found out when he returned after giving that assurance to Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, the foreign minister, he was told, No, no, no, we're going to expand because the policy of the United States is to destroy Russia. So, NATO, expansion was done for one reason and one reason only, it wasn't to preserve democracy or anything. It was to destroy

Russia, create conditions of the economic and geopolitical strangulation of Russia. The other thing is NATO can no longer be considered a defensive alliance. Article four is another NATO thing where they can go to war and that's where NATO nations determine a threat exists sufficient for them to engage in offensive military operations. And it's been used against Syria. It's been used against Libya. It's been used elsewhere. NATO is an offensive, expansive military alliance that represents a threat not only to Europe, Russia, but the world. Please stop calling it a defensive alliance. It is not a defensive alliance. Look what it's doing in Ukraine. This is purely offensive operations against Russia using a Ukrainian proxy. It's not me saying this, the Ukrainian minister of defense came out the other day and said, "We are literally a proxy of NATO. We are de facto NATO and therefore our blood will be shed but we need your equipment. We need you to equip us." The German minister of defense spoke recently and she said, "We are at war with Russia." Did Russia attack NATO? No, NATO attacked Russia.

**ZR:** Let's get to some current military developments. In the last few weeks, international domestic pressure was mounting on the German government to send its Leopard 2 battle tanks, considered one of the most agile tanks in Europe. According to reports from today, the German government has approved sending Leopard 2, while the US will send the advanced M1 Abrams tanks and the UK the Challenger 2 tanks while a decision still awaits on the French Leclerc tank. Do you think these tanks will enhance Ukraine's military capabilities and recapture lost territories and perhaps change the tide of war?

**SR:** No. First of all, people need to understand that Russia's been preparing to fight NATO's tanks for some time now. So if you think this is the first time Russia has considered confronting a Leopard 2, an Abrams or Leclerc or Challenger, you're wrong. They have weapons systems designed to destroy these tanks. So right off the bat, that's just a statement of reality. Two, the Ukrainians have never used anything like these tanks before. They're used to T-72 tanks, the T-64 modification tanks using three automatic loaders, things of that nature. They're getting completely different systems. This is a logistical nightmare for Ukraine. You're talking about four different kinds of main battle tanks. One of them uses jet fuel. Jet fuel. That's the M1 Abrams. The others are just completely different systems. If you can repair a Leopard, you can't repair a Leclerc and you can't repair a challenger. They're completely different systems. You don't know how they operate, etc. You're supposed to receive these tanks, you get trained on these tanks, be able to sustain these tanks logistically for maintenance and then put them in combat against a unit, an organization that's already ready to kill you. All this guarantees is that the Leopard 2 will follow the path of the Tiger and the Panther. Those are World War Two German tanks that the Russians proved to be quite expert at destroying on Ukrainian soil. That's what's going to happen to the Leopard. They'll be destroyed on Ukrainian soil. Tragically, the Leclerc, the Challenger and the Abrams are tanks belonging to nations that were the allies of the Soviet Union when they combined to fight the forces of German fascism. But now these three nations are actually supporting the progeny of Adolf Hitler, which is what Stepan Bandera's vision of white national, white

supremacist ultranationalist in Ukraine is. It is literally an extension of Adolf Hitler's odious ideology. Now, American tanks, British tanks and French tanks are going to be on Ukrainian soil supporting this resurgence of fascism. Russia will destroy those as well. This isn't going to change anything. It'll cause more people to die, mainly Ukrainians. It's a death sentence for tens of thousands of Ukrainians. It's a death sentence for thousands of Russians. But isn't going to change the outcome on the battlefield.

**ZR:** Analysts predict a huge Russian offensive coming soon, in the coming weeks or months due to the large mobilization that Putin announced last year, as well as the fact that it was recently conducting military drills with Belarus, including Air Force drills. Before approving the Leopard 2 tanks, Germany, perhaps fearing Russian escalation, sent more Patriot systems to Poland while the US has committed to sending the Patriot system directly to Ukraine. These new weapons could perhaps counter the new Russian offensive. How do you assess these latest military developments?

**SR:** Nothing is going to counter the Russian offensive. The Russians aren't stupid. They've learned from the errors and the lessons that emerged during phase one, phase two and phase three of their operations. They've mobilized, they've reorganized, they've refocused, and they're going to war with open eyes. They're going to war. It's no longer a special military operation. You can call it that but it's war. So the idea that NATO is going to do anything - the Patriot system, we're talking about a battery with eight launchers. This is the Patriot system that failed to shoot down a single Iraqi Scud during the Gulf War. This is the Patriot system that shot down more allied aircraft in 2003 than did Iraqi missiles. This Patriot system couldn't defend Saudi oilfields against Houthi drone attacks. And now that's going to go up against the Russians? No, the Patriot can have zero impact. First of all, you have to train the people for it, and that has to get in there first. I think the Patriots are going to be like every other system NATO sent in. It's going to be turned into junk surrounded by the mutilated corpses of the Ukrainians that were trying to operate it.

**ZR:** I would like to make another counter argument. Russia recently appointed a new commander in the war in Ukraine. General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the Russian general staff, who would now become the overall commander of the war, replacing the current commander, Sergei Surovikin. Ukraine was also able to recapture 54% of the territory previously held by Russia, largely due to Western military, economic and logistical support. Don't you think adding more Western support at this current time will help Ukraine win the war and recapture all its territories?

**SR:** No, I couldn't be in more disagreement. Look, the Russians went in with insufficient resources, and they knew that. When the Ukrainians launched their counteroffensive in September, they did so only with the help of tens of billions of dollars of military equipment assistance provided by NATO. What did Ukraine do? It went up against an overextended Russian defensive line. What did the Russians do rather than die? They tactically withdrew.

Yes, they gave up some territory, but they consolidated their defensive lines with minimal loss in human life and material cost. Meanwhile, they slaughtered the Ukrainians. 20,000 to 30,000 Ukrainians who participated in these offenses were killed. The equipment that NATO provided was destroyed. Now, where are we? A weakened Ukrainian army. What did the Russians do? They mobilised 300,000 troops, probably another 100,000 and some volunteers. They're training and equipping them with the most modern equipment. They're being brought to bear on a battlefield. Russia's gotten stronger. Ukraine has gotten weaker. That's the reality. We can play math games all we want, at the end of the day, it's military math. The Russian ability to kill Ukrainians far exceeds the ability of Ukrainians to kill Russians. The Russians are replenishing their troops at a far greater rate than Ukraine is. It's basic military math. Russia cannot lose.

**ZR:** According to media reports in Germany, Ukraine has withdrawn from Soledar today, a highly contested city. Many analysts say the city has no geopolitical or strategic importance. Why do you think that both sides invested so much into this conflict over the city? And what does it mean for the overall war?

**SR:** The Soledar-Bakhmut complex is the key to the Ukrainian defensive line. If it didn't mean anything, Ukraine wouldn't have poured everything they had into defending it. Ukraine didn't withdraw from Soledar. Ukraine was kicked out of Soledar. Ukraine was slaughtered in Soledar. Soledar was literally the meat grinder for the Ukrainian military, just like Bakhmut is right now. You know, if it wasn't a big deal, the Ukrainians wouldn't have withdrawn and fallen back on other defensive lines. But nothing is defensible as Soledar-Bakhmut with their underground salt mine, their interlocking defense system, a defense belt that's been well developed over the course of eight years. The Russians are beating the Ukrainians. The Russians are doing it because Ukrainians want to die, literally. Ukrainians have poured in 14 brigades that have been slaughtered by the Russians, 10 to 1, 15 to 1 casualty ratios. Russia will fight that war all day long but the Ukrainians know psychologically if that line is pierced, they're going to have very big problems because there's no similar defensive line for them to fall back on. So, you know, that's why Ukraine is continuing to resist in Bakhmut because if one spot would fall in Soledar-Bakhmut, the Gordian knot that held the Ukrainian defense together will have been cut and with it goes Ukraine's ability to sustain a cohesive defense.

**ZR:** Scott Ritter, analyst, author, thank you so much for your time today.

**SR:** Thanks for having me.

**ZR:** And thank you guys for tuning in today. Don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube has severely impacted our reach. Our information is not being recommended to our viewers like it used to a few years ago. And also, if you're obtaining value from our information in building your independent perspective on these

issues, make sure to return that value by donating just \$1 or Euro a month via PayPal, Patreon or bank account. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you guys next time!

**END**