



## Is War With Iran—Long-Time Neocon Fantasy—Finally Here?

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**Glenn Greenwald:** If neocons in the United States have had any one overarching dream for at least two decades, it is that the United States goes to war with Iran. It has been so clear, often explicitly, that what they want, more than anything, is for the United States to go and confront the country that just so happens to be the arch rival, the main threat to the country of Israel, and have the United States go and have a war with Israel's principal adversary. There have been all kinds of ways that that has been averted, often narrowly. In 2005, there was a notorious quote, while the United States was still engaged in that war in Iraq, that we were told it would take weeks for the U.S. to win. And instead we got dragged into a conundrum there that lasted for years. And even though that was happening, even though Americans were dying by the thousands in Iraq, to say nothing of the number of innocent Iraqi civilians who were killed, there were neocons saying things to the press like, "real men go to Tehran". Meaning it's not enough that we overturned the government of Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein by force. "Real men" understand that we now need to go do that in Iran as well. They've been thirsting for and craving this war with Iran for decades. They've been concocting all sorts of reasons why the United States needs to go and bomb Iran. And as it turns out, they've been doing it since the beginning of the October 7th attack on Israel, when people like Nikki Haley and Lindsey Graham came out and didn't just say we should arm and fund and finance Israel's war, as we've been doing, but Nikki Haley, Lindsey Graham and that whole crowd began saying before anything even happened after the October 7th attack, we need to go and strike Iran and strike them hard. And it now appears that the precipitating event that might cause that to happen is finally here, namely, that there was a drone attack on a United States base in Jordan that the United States blames on or attributes to Iran and Iran backed militias. And it ended up killing three American soldiers.

There have been lots of these attacks over the past three months that the United States has been also engaged in. The United States has been bombing what they claim are Iran linked military bases in Syria and Iraq, and killing the people who are there and Iran or Iranian backed militia, according to the United States, has been launching attacks on US bases in Syria and Iraq and Jordan. It seemed like it was only a matter of time before it actually did

real damage. It has wounded American soldiers on several occasions, but it hadn't killed any until now. Now, I don't even think most Americans realise that the United States has bases in Jordan, let alone in Syria and Iraq. Why do we still have a military base in Iraq when that country is made clear they want us to leave? Why do we have a series of military installations in Syria, a country with that we were never officially at war, even though the government of Syria obviously does not want the United States military presence in its country. Why do we have military bases in Jordan and all throughout the region, where we're risking American lives in the form of our soldiers, who are not very well protected in a region where we are now involved in a very serious war that is extremely polarising and inflaming in that region?! Obviously, it's predictable that the anger in that region, not just toward Israel, but to its main patron, the United States, will put those troops in harm's way, has a very high likelihood of provoking attacks by people in that region, angry at the United States for funding and providing the arms for Israel's war. And that is exactly what has been happening. You cannot go around the world financing other countries' wars and putting your troops all throughout their region, and expect that at various points you won't be attacked. That's not a realistic way of thinking about the world. And now that there's this attack that killed three American soldiers, a lot of people in Washington finally see this as not just the opportunity, but the necessity for Joe Biden to go and bomb targets inside Iran, which is so dangerous for so many reasons. Iran is three times the size of Iraq. They have much more sophisticated military capabilities. They have their tentacles in multiple countries throughout the region and can do a great deal of damage.

Here's the New York Times article, which always gives the kind of dynamic in Washington, which I think is important to understand. From today, there you see the headline: Biden's Options Range From Unsatisfying to Risky After American Deaths; quote, "President Biden is balancing political pressures, military calculations and regional fragility, after a drone strike killed three service members." "Mr. Biden could order strikes on the proxy forces, a major escalation of the whack-a-mole attacks it has conducted in recent weeks in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. So far, those attacks have put a dent into the abilities of the Iranian backed groups that have mounted more than 160 attacks. But they have failed, as Mr. Biden himself noted 10 days ago, to deter these groups. Mr. Biden could decide to go after the Iranian suppliers of drones and missiles, perhaps including inside Iranian territory, which poses a much higher risk. His first targets could be members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, many of whom are based in Syria and Iraq. Depending on how these strikes are conducted, it can open up another front in the war with a far more powerful adversary, and trigger Tehran to accelerate its nuclear program".

Now, let's just stop there for a minute. Obviously, the focus on Iran over the past decade has been primarily targeted on the question of whether Iran will acquire a nuclear weapon. And the question is not only how do you stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, but how do you prevent them from wanting a nuclear weapon? Typically, countries know that there are real consequences if they pursue a nuclear weapons program in the form of the kind of crippling sanctions that have been imposed on Iran. But the question is, why would a country want nuclear weapons? And the answer is they would want nuclear weapons if they feel

sufficiently threatened; threatened by other countries around the world that have nuclear weapons, and who can therefore attack Iran without much fear unless and until Iran has nuclear weapons. And with so many threats issuing from Washington and Tel Aviv to attack Iran, obviously Iran has a great deal of incentive to acquire nuclear weapons. One of the things you can look at throughout the world is that countries who have nuclear weapons are respected and not trifled with. That's one of the reasons the United States – it's unthinkable that they could do that and could go to war with North Korea. That's one of the reasons why both Pakistan and India have to respect one another so much, even though they have long standing and deep seated animosities toward one another. We have more or less created the framework where countries know that if you have nuclear weapons, you are invulnerable to attack, and if you don't have nuclear weapons, you are liable to being attacked by the United States. That has been the framework that has been created over the past many decades. And so if the goal is to keep Iran from proliferating and acquiring nuclear weapons, continuously threatening them with a conventional attack either by Israel, the United States seems like a very poor way to go about that.

The article goes on, quote, "Because Iran has been an adversary for so long, across eight presidencies, there is no shortage of such options. The United States has identified the major drone making factories and their overseas suppliers, that are fuelling the Russian attack in Ukraine and supplying Hezbollah, the Houthis and other proxy groups. The Senate minority leader, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, called for, quote, 'crippling costs' for Iran, 'not only on frontline terrorist proxies, but on their Iranian sponsors who wear American blood as a badge of honour'." So Mitch McConnell, very predictably, like every Republican in the Senate, with the exception of a few that he's been leading for decades, supports every American war, every proposed American war and he's using rhetoric to demand that the United States not only attack Iran, but do so with a great deal of aggression. "Senator John Cornyn, the Texas Republican, demanded strikes on Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard, its military elite – and the guardians of the nuclear program. 'Time to kill another Iranian general, perhaps?' Representative Daniel Crenshaw, also of Texas, wrote on social media on Sunday, recalling the Suleimani attack. Quote, 'That might send the right message'. Now, it is interesting that in the Republican Party 20 years ago, you would have had almost nobody questioning this kind of thinking. Probably Ron Paul and a couple of other people maybe and that would have been it. The Republican Party would have been completely united in the idea that the United States should go and bomb Iran. No questioning about the implications, about the risk of escalation, no questioning at all about the reasons we are in that region in the first place, and why our troops are vulnerable to attack. There is now, however, a significant sentiment on the American right that in fact these ideas of attacking Iran are lunacy. In fact, Tucker Carlson, arguably the most influential conservative in American media, went to Twitter yesterday, something he rarely does to manifest on a political topic. And he took the graphic of two tweets, one from Lindsey Graham saying: "Hit Iran now. Hit them hard" and one from Senator John Cornyn saying: "Target Tehran" and at the top he wrote simply quote, "Fucking lunatics". And this tweet went mega viral. It's been retweeted something like 50,000 times. It's been liked another 4 or 500,000 times more, viewed by millions of people. This is finally a significant mentality on the American right that has been becoming increasingly anti

interventionist, being more and more willing to question the wisdom of why we go around the world constantly subjecting our troops to attacks and our country to attacks, even though we don't really have any direct interest in doing so.

**END**

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