



## Col. Wilkerson: Israel Can't Win This War with Iran

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Today I'll be talking to Lawrence Wilkerson, retired army colonel who served in the US Army for 31 years. Lawrence Wilkerson and I will be talking about the Israeli-US attack on Iran. Lawrence Wilkerson was also chief of staff for then Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002 and 2005. He's now senior fellow at the Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Lawrence, welcome back the show.

**Lawrence Wilkerson (LW):** Good to be with you, Zain. I appreciate your ability to get me into a European audience.

**ZR:** You're welcome, Lawrence. On February 28th, the United States and Israel launched a war on Iran with Operation Epic Fury and assassinated Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei along with several senior Iranian officials. The US-stated goals are: degrading Iran's offensive missile capabilities, destroying key military infrastructure, preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, and in President Trump's words, "giving Iranians a chance to topple their rulers". What makes this particularly significant is that the attack came while US-Iran negotiations were still underway, with Oman mediating indirect talks between the two sides. After the strike that assassinated Khamenei, Iran has ruled out any further negotiations. Since then, US and Israeli forces have struck hundreds of targets across Iran, while Iran has retaliated with ballistic missiles and drones against Israel and US bases across the Gulf region, including in Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain.

The war has already produced significant casualties. Reports indicate that the death toll in Iran is roughly between 900 and 1300 civilians, including one of the deadliest incidents, a strike on a girls' school in Minab that killed more than 160 children and staff. On the other side, Israeli authorities say about a dozen people have been killed in Israel, while US officials say six American soldiers have been killed in Gulf bases. At sea, the conflict has also expanded. The US recently sank the Iranian warship IRIS Dena, while Iran has threatened and disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of the

world oil supply passes. Can you provide your assessment of this war and explain what objective you believe the United States and Israel are ultimately pursuing?

**LW:** That's a lot. It's aptly entitled "Epic Fury". Think about that for a moment. Epic Fury, I don't know who selected that title, but it's an apt title, because what the administration expects and what the administration is going to get are two totally diametrically opposed results. And by that I mean they do not understand the nature of this war. The nature of this war is demonstrated by what we did in the opening forays, if you will, killing school children, killing the Ayatollah, bombing a hospital and having the nurses run out in the street, and other acts like that which smack of Israel, they smack of Israel. But I can't discount the empire as well.

Why do I say they have misunderstood this entire conflict, which, of course, Clausewitz points out very graphically, understanding the nature of the conflict is essential before you embark. It's very simple, really, but it breeds enormous complexity. The simplicity is a 3,000-year-old people against a 250-year old people, and the resilience of that former and the lack of resilience of the latter. There's no way this lines up as being a propitious event for the empire. And they're finding that out right now in every way you could possibly imagine. And, oh, by the way, like Netanyahu, they've learned, and we've done this in every war we've ever fought, including World War II, but they've learnt a lot very well. The casualties are far greater than they're reporting on our side, as it were. The damage is far, far greater than they're reporting, especially on Israel. And the damage to Iran and its real war-fighting capabilities is being exaggerated by both capitals, Jerusalem and Washington. So we've started off on a lying campaign. We've started off on a conflict we don't understand the dimensions of. And we're going to hurt very badly.

And I haven't even talked about the economic dimensions, which are growing every moment of the day. We're looking at India, for example, getting something like 60% of its refined and crude products through the Strait of Hormuz. If you look at a map, you can see why. It's just a short route from the strait to the Indian ports. It's going to cost Modi probably somewhere in the neighborhood of \$15 billion, I'm told by people who know India's economy well, just to make up for what he's going to lose. And he only has on hand a 25-day supply. So he's quickly shifted back to Russia for oil purchases. I'm sure Moscow's elated over that. They are going to be a huge benefactor of this.

But I'll go back to a 2009 exercise I was a part of in Beijing. We call it a "petroleum disruption exercise". And we had MARAD, we had Lloyds of London, we had other insurers, we had US shipping industry magnates there, European shipping industry magnets there. We had all kinds of people there from the security community. And we postulated just a small terrorist attack in the Strait of Malacca. And then the second game move was literally taking down Ras Tanura, at that time about eight million barrels per day production capacity in Saudi Arabia. And West Texas Intermediate and the benchmark crude, Brent crude, went to \$200 a barrel almost overnight. And the only thing that saved the situation was everyone agreeing that the United States Navy, other navies in the region like the Singaporeans and the

Five Power Defense agreement there, and so forth, flowed into it quickly and dissipated the threat.

But that shows you the dimensions of what can happen when you disrupt the most needed commodity in many respects next to food in the world. Everyone needs petroleum or petroleum products. So this is a disaster shaping up. And if the Houthis, Ansar Allah, and Yemen pitch in, which I'm sure they will eventually and close the Bab al-Mandab, much the way the Strait of Hormuz is, right now I think closed, it's going to double the damage because the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, of course, provide far more transit than just petroleum products. They provide transit for foodstuffs and all manner of other production coming from around the world. So this is really fraught with economic consequences that this administration simply hasn't thought through.

And let me say before I put a coda on that – this administration, including the two supposed diplomats, Witkoff and Kushner, have made windfall profits off playing the stock market with regard to their knowledge, foreknowledge, of when this attack was going to occur, particularly egregious for two diplomats who were helping the subterfuge by continuing diplomacy, supposedly, until the bomb started dropping. This is unconscionable in terms of international law, in terms of domestic law even, but we have a government in the United States owned by Donald Trump, as demonstrated vividly by the Congress trying to at least make a move coming close, but being defeated by democratic votes, including Chuck Schumer, the leader in the Senate, the leading Democrat. They stopped this vote to censure the president, essentially, for starting this war. So we are locked into a government that has no sense of the Constitution, no sense of the disaster upon which the president has embarked this country, and no sense of what we're doing to our allies and their confidence in us, and no sense at all of the nature of this conflict.

**ZR:** You have seen many wars over a three-decade military career and later in government from Vietnam to the Gulf War era and the post-9/11 wars. Looking at the military balance in this conflict, Iran entered with one of the largest missile arsenals in the region. Estimates suggest roughly around 2,000 medium-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel and about 6,000 to 8,000 short-range missiles along with a large drone arsenal. On the other side, the United States and Israel have far more advanced air and missile defense systems and naval interceptors, but analysts note that interceptor inventories are limited and the campaign has focused heavily on destroying Iranian missile launchers before those defensive stocks are depleted. President Trump has said he believes the operation could last about four weeks, and he has also said that he does not rule out boots on the ground if it becomes absolutely necessary. Taking all of this into account from a purely military standpoint, how long do you think this war can realistically continue? And secondly, do you believe the United States and Israel can achieve their objectives alone through air power or do you think they will be drawn into this conflict with boots on the ground?

**LW:** Well, Donald Trump also said, you may recall, that we had just a few months ago completely destroyed Iran's nuclear program and capability to build a nuclear weapon. So

Donald Trump has no problem lying, and he's lying now. Whether he knows the depth of his lies is another matter altogether, because I think he's being very badly advised, including, I think, by the Pentagon. I once walked into the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's office, Colin Powell, at the time, and I said in some irritation, we should ensure a law or something that says an Air Force officer can never be chairman of a Joint Chief of Staff. He laughed, but he understood what I meant. He understood what it meant. Air Force officers think that bombs can solve all the problems in the world. All you got to do is bomb some people, and they will bow down to your wishes. It's nonsense, and history proves it's nonsense. Just go back and look at the 78-day bombing campaign on Serbia that William Jefferson Clinton conducted and what that produced. It wasn't anywhere near what was necessary until ground forces were threatened and until Russia essentially did what she did in that conflict. And by the way, that started the problems with Russia, and amplified them in a big way.

So to answer your question directly, it is to say that, one, Iran is pummeling Israel right now, and Netanyahu stays on an airplane. He doesn't want to be killed. I mean, he's been on an airplane more than a flight attendant for a major airline in the world. He doesn't want to be killed, and he knows he's being targeted. What Iran has done has been very astute. They learn from those 11, 12, 13 days and the great beautiful war and so forth. And they had learned over the last some odd quarter century or so. And what they've done is they've bled and are bleeding even further all the air defense assets around the area, but also in Israel, by making those very expensive assets fire at their first and second waves of fairly cheap drones and cheap missiles, and expending their missiles. And by the way, there aren't a whole lot more to put in those Patriot batteries and other things. And so they are doing a very strategic thing there.

They have now started a little bit of the second wave. They've got a third, a fourth, and I think a fifth wave and each wave gets more sophisticated until you come to the fourth or fifth wave, which I think is going to be hypersonic missiles. One or two might've been fired already. Especially out in the North Arabian Sea. You may have noted that our fleet, such as it is, backed up another three or 400 kilometers. They were already a thousand kilometers off because they're very frightened of these missiles. And Iran has still a lot in its inventory that it hasn't fired yet. These are Mach 3, Mach 4, possibly even Mach 5 missiles. You cannot shoot them down. They're too fast. And they will take out a US warship just like that, including Lincoln or Ford, the two mainstays of the battle groups, the aircraft carriers.

So Iran is being very astute, and it's also being fairly astute in what it's doing attacking our assets elsewhere in the region, whether they be in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, or the devastating attack in Bahrain, which was cheered by the Bahraini citizens, not by the Emir, of course, but by the Bahraini citizens. And I think I'm hearing good evidence that it disabled our ability to vertically load in Bahrain, which means those ships have to go all the way to Diego Garcia to get the cranes and the apparatus to vertically load the missiles in the ships. So there's another inhibition. And I know from checking with people across the country in terms of production facilities that Trump is lying grossly about the number of missiles we have because production facilities are not ramped up and production facilities haven't been ramped up for

some time. And it would take six to eight months to do that. And we are not producing these missiles at anything like a wartime rate. So we're going to run out of them eventually. I'd say in a week or two, we will probably be down to the last few. That's going to mean even more damage to Israel, more damage to the regional targets because Iran is husbanding its missiles.

And as long as I'm talking about their missiles last night, I found out that they're doing what the Serbs did, which might be expected of them. They've built cardboard facsimiles of some of the tails, the launchers, the above ground missile launchers and so forth. And we're bombing them and reporting them back as we did in Serbia as "missile carriers destroyed". It's no such thing. It's a \$50 fabricated cardboard silhouette on the ground and we're being diverted and we are attacking those with very, very expensive airplanes, three of which have been shot down that we know of, and we're attacking them with very expensive munitions. We don't have a lot of precision-guided munitions like this for these airplanes firing them at this quantity. So there again, we're going to run out. It's not going to be a short conflict. It's going to be a very long conflict. And as we have seen from everything basically that the United States has got itself involved in since roughly the 9/11 period, and even before that, I'd go back to Vietnam and Korea, we have not learned our lesson that bombs do not bring an enemy to his knees. They simply infuriate him, solidify his population and make him a formidable and ultimately victorious enemy. That's what we're confronting here.

**ZR:** I want to make a pit stop in Europe and talk about the consent that is being spread here by the political and media establishment. In Germany and across much of the West there is a strong perception that military intervention was necessary and perhaps the only remaining means to liberate the Iranian people from what many describe as the brutal suppression of the government. In a statement released by the German government on March 1st in Berlin, Chancellor Friedrich Merz wrote, quote: "The German government shares the relief of many Iranians that this mullah regime is now coming to an end." In contrast, however, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez warned about the dangers of war in a televised address in Madrid on March 4th, saying, quote: "You cannot play Russian roulette with the destiny of millions. This is how humanity's great disasters start." You personally have seen wars justified in the language of democracy, humanitarian intervention and liberation before. From your experience and looking specifically at Iran today, do you believe this war is more likely to liberate the Iranian people or deepen their suffering, taking into account the short and long term?

**LW:** In the short term, of course, it's increasing their suffering greatly – just the school, the hospital, and other things that are being bombed with typical Netanyahu disregard for civilian life. Netanyahu doesn't give a hang for civilian life as long as it's not inside Israel's borders. So if we look at it from the perspective of damage being done and resilience being created by that damage, Iran is clearly winning. If we look at Israel right now, they're clearly losing. Right now the 90,000 call-up of reservists that they put in motion in order to invade Lebanon is quite imperfect, to just put as good a word as I can on it. They're not getting them. I'm told that somewhere from 20,000 upward are either not showing up or refusing to go or whatever. So they've got a real problem there. And you have got a situation in Israel right now where if

certain leaders were to awaken to the possibilities – and I'm talking about to Sisi in Egypt, I'm talking about that vassal of the United States and Jordan, which nonetheless is sitting on top of about six and a half million Palestinians or more, and I'm talking about Iraq, which is a far more potential power in this regard – if they were to march on Israel right now, she would fall over like a basket case. If they even remotely coordinated their armies, especially their armored columns, and marched on Israel, it would fall. And this is something that Arab leaders have been trying to bring off ever since 1948. And there has never been a more advantageous moment.

Now, I don't for a moment think that these cowards in these Arab countries who are on the American dole, just like the Saudis and others in the region, I don't think they're going to have the courage or the smarts to go out and do something like that. But it just shows you the potential vulnerability of Israel right now to any number of threats that Netanyahu thinks he's got cowed to the point that they will never operationalize, they will never come to be. But he's got real problems, and I think that's one reason he's flying around, not simply because he doesn't want to die by a few salvos of Iranian missiles, but because he doesn't know what to do, except keep on keeping on. And that Epic Fury is enveloping him, as it were. So I don't think this is going to be a very positive experience.

As to Europe, the mixed signals to me exemplify what you're — and Nigel Farage, for example, coming to Mar-a-Lago, you know, apparently [to get] a handout, and a, you know, "Mr. Trump, [I'm] with you 100% if I get elected," blah, blah. That's another dimension to it. I think Europe is in chaos right now. That's another dimension to it. I think Europe is in chaos right now. It's in mental chaos, it's in security chaos, it's economic chaos, you name your degree of chaos or field of chaos, and that's where Europe is. I don't see them picking up the pieces on this anytime soon. I do see them throwing people like Merz and Macron and Starmer and others out, but I don't know what they're going to be replaced with. Germany, for example, I have no idea what the AfD, for example, would bring to Germany. I've no idea how it would consolidate some of the interest in Germany that I think would be most inimical to Europe's future and to Germany's future. I have no idea what's going to come in France, no idea of what's going to come in Britain other than I can sense the British people, the English people, if you will, not necessarily the British people – Wales and Scotland and other places might have different feelings and indeed do in most cases. But the English people are confused right now. They don't know which way to turn, and they don't know specifically which way to turn with that monumental decision they took a few years ago called Brexit, divorcing themselves from the continent. Was that a good move or a bad move? And oh by the way, what's the future portend?

And the future, for example, is being demonstrated in economic terms vividly right now. Some of the papers in this country, and I suspect it's been happening in Europe too, have revealed the fact that the leaderships have been hiding economic reports of great importance. In this country Trump has been hiding, and I'm not saying Biden didn't too to a degree, and Democrats other than Biden, but he's been hiding the job numbers and he's been revising them a month or two later and nobody pays much attention to that. But the job numbers in

this country, the job creation numbers, are terrible. Absolutely terrible. As are the inflation numbers, as are our other economic numbers that indicate we are in trouble. And this business of oil and gas is a big part of that trouble if you think about it in the dimensions one should if one is president of the United States.

For example, Trump promised many times during the inauguration, as I recall, and just after, that he would bring up the strategic petroleum reserve to at least above 500 million gallons, which is the floor, we say, for being in danger. Well, it's at 415 right now. Check out China's. It's overflowing. We are making our own problems every day by the incompetence of this administration. Particularly in the economic field. We're losing the battle, if you will, with China at an enormous rate. I think, personally, that this may be one of the motivations for the billionaires behind Donald Trump who are really running him for this war, because not only did they want the 300 million barrels that, 300 billion barrels, I guess, I get billions and millions confused in these discussions, there's so much confusion in the papers and everything else, but Venezuela's oil was coveted for that very purpose because more oil you get your hands on, or at least have some leverage over, and we still are exercising quite a bit of leverage over whom Venezuela can ship to and when and where they can ship.

So we're coveting that in Iran, too. We're back to the old game with the British and the Russians and the Ottomans and others. But the British in the Russians really coveted, as you may recall, that Iranian oil, and the British finally got it. They got it and milked the Iranians for everything they were worth. I saw some economic figures just the other day, revised ones on how the British really raped Iran when they were running essentially their oil industry. The Iranians got maybe five cents out of every dollar or every pound, and the British got the rest. And all this, of course, led to the overthrow of Mossadegh in 1953, the first elected Democratic member of the Iranian regime to be elected to the presidency or the prime ministership. So this is a long running thing, that we have coveted the oil in the Gulf for our and particularly Iran's. This is going to get it, we think. I think we're wrong. I think that we're dead wrong. What we're going to is chaos, and we're going to chaos that impacts very adversely on the empire and on our allies like Japan, who get a lot of their oil, and India, and probably some other countries that are going to see the impact of what the Houthis will ultimately do, I think, with Chinese and Russian and Iranian help – three powers that are going help the Houthis close the Red Sea to anything but their traffic, as they did before. And we already saw Hegseth try to open it, and he failed spectacularly, and we lost a lot of money. This is a huge conflict, not the little limited war that Trump thinks it is, and not the limited time that Trump thinks, unless he himself stops it cold and stops the clock. But he won't do that.

**ZR:** Talking about motivations, what do you think is driving this conflict domestically? We know that the Epstein files were making huge rounds just before this war began. For example, everybody knows the infamous appearance of Pam Bondi, United States Attorney General, before congressional hearings. This was all taking place during that time. Even many Republicans came out and started speaking against Trump regarding the Epstein files. Then we have other things like Zionism and the Israeli Lobby in the United States. And some

say that perhaps this is the attempt for Israel to finally gain unimpeded regional influence as they have repeatedly stated that Iran has never been in a more weaker position than it is today with Hezbollah, the leadership taken out in Lebanon, Syria now divided, and Iran's arsenal was greatly reduced in the last year's war. So what do you think is driving this policy forward? Is this a combination of many elements or do you think that the stated objective of the United States to bring democracy and humanism and what we're being told in the media here in Germany by the political establishment is the driving force?

**LW:** Well, there are enormous implications to all your questions that aren't good for the empire or for Europe or any other of the empire's allies, and certainly not probably good for the globe and not good for the region. The first is that it's clear, it's been clear for some time, though the United States tried to obfuscate and make it not clear, that Israel's design as our own ambassador, traitor that he is, revealed the other day in conversation with the press. We are after Israel having control over the entire Levant, perhaps even including Turkey and around to Eastern Africa. You heard that right. That's what Netanyahu wants. And our ambassador admitted to it, flat out admitted to it.

And you're right, there are some religious implications to that that are frankly very scary, very frightening, because it means there are people who are using Armageddon, the rapture, whatever you want to call it, this really strange interpretation of Christianity, to align themselves with what should be their religious enemy, if you will, the Zionist Jews, in order to accomplish their purpose, which avowedly will end the Jews' supremacy, will end their lives even. I mean, Christ is supposed to kill all the unbelievers when he comes back to earth to establish this thousand-year kingdom. What does that mean for the Jews? So, this is an unholy, if you will, holy alliance between the two religions.

That notwithstanding, it's being used by politicians for all kinds of nefarious purposes. But to your question, Netanyahu's purpose in the region, a purpose to which we're allied, is total chaos and confusion everywhere he can wreak it, but particularly with his most formidable enemies like Syria, like Iran, and eventually – and this should make the Arab states shiver in their boots – them. Because Israel wants the whole territory. And unfortunately and sadly, for various and sundry reasons, part of which is in comprehension of this ultimate objective or unwillingness to accept it, except for Huckabee, ignorance on the part of the empire, going along with it. Going along with it against ostensibly our own allies like Saudi Arabia and Qatar and the Arab Emirates and others. So it's fraught with problems in terms of interpretation of the purpose of the conflict on the main side, which is Israel, and the main supporting side, the Empire. We have different purposes, different objectives, and yet we're engaged in the same killing. This is a recipe for disaster, too.

And Europe comes in with a jaundiced point of view about it and a mixed point of view. Look at Spain. Spain is acting sane. Other countries aren't acting sane. Why did Iran attack European NATO facilities in Cyprus, Greece, or I guess it was in Greece and Cyprus. I'm being told now by a competent authority that those were false flags by the Israelis to try and expand the conflict on their own and get more people on their side. I don't know the truth of

that, but it rings true to me. I know that Israel, for example, is in Cyprus and southern Greece right now with its intel and special forces elements trying to create the consequences and the ground, if you will, for a future movement against Ankara. Think about that for a moment. Naftali Bennett has already admitted that the next target for Israel after Iran is Erdogan and Turkey. And believe me, Erdogan heard that. So this business of us, the empire, and Israel arming the Kurds in Iraq and using them for a ground conflict in Iran – which is our plan right now at this moment – is nonsense because Turkey will fall on those Kurds from the rear and destroy them, as Erdogan has wanted to do with Kurds from time to time. And that'll back up into Syria and cause even more chaos in a place that's now being run, as we all know, by an al-Qaeda former, an al-Qaeda ISIL former. You can't make this up. You can build a more dangerous scenario to get enmeshed in as we are rapidly now than what is happening. And if I were Europe, I would keep my hands and fingers and feet completely away from it and watch the empire do whatever it is going to do to itself and ultimately have to recoil and come home and hope that it didn't any more damage, I think that's a forlorn hope, to the transatlantic link and to NATO in specific, both of which I think are broken and dead.

**ZR:** Lawrence Wilkerson, retired army colonel. We have unfortunately run out of time and have to leave it here. Thank you so much for your time and insights.

**LW:** Thank you for the opportunity, Zain.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow us going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And don't forget to donate to our independent journalism – journalism that doesn't take any money from corporations and governments and provides you with information that is free from external influence. I thank you for tuning in and for your support. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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