



Iran: The Story You're Not Meant to Hear | Scott Horton

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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. Before I begin this interview, I would like to remind you to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, has a close partnership with the United States National Security Apparatus and a long history of shadow banning and censoring content of independent and critical media such as ours. You will find the link to all of our alternative platforms in the description of this video below. Also, if you're watching our videos regularly, make sure to donate today. We don't take any money from corporations or governments to provide you with information that is free from an external influence. You will now see a PayPal QR code appear on the screen. If you scan it with your phone's camera, you'll be able to donate to us without any hassle.

Today I'll be speaking with Scott Horton, Director of the Libertarian Institute and Editorial Director of antiwar.com. He is widely regarded as one of America's leading non-interventionist voices and is the author of several books, the latest being *Provoked – How Washington Started a New Cold War with Russia and Catastrophe in Ukraine*. Scott, welcome back to the show.

Scott Horton (SH): Thank you for having me. Good to be with you.

ZR: Scott, let us begin with the latest developments, if that is even possible given how rapidly the situation seems to be changing from hour to hour. It's quite confusing with many mixed and contradictory messages. On the one hand, US President Trump keeps suggesting that the United States and Iran are close to some kind of deal, while Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, on the other hand, has said there has been no significant progress. At the same time, military exchanges continue. The US has reportedly carried out strikes near the Strait of Hormuz and on Iran's Qashm Island, while US Central Command claimed that Iranian missiles and drones target regional sites, including Kuwait's airport.

There's also growing political pressure in Washington itself. The House has passed a war powers resolution directing Trump to withdraw US forces from hostilities with Iran unless

Congress formally authorizes the war. The resolution still needs to pass the Senate and could face a presidential veto. Meanwhile, Israel and Lebanon have announced another US-backed ceasefire, with Hezbollah not being part of the deal. Despite the announcement, fighting continues in the South. Israel says it will remain in what it calls a buffer zone, while Iran has warned that the US-Iran ceasefire cannot be separated from Lebanon. Before we dive into the wider context, how do you assess the US war with Iran so far?

SH: Well, I mean, you just said it all. It's a complete catastrophe. I mean just to pick one thread to pull on, who even thinks that America can get Israel to stop bombing Lebanon and even stop at, in the way that you described there, at the Latani River and not keep going – or I think they already have at least in some places reached as far as the Zahari River, which is the next one north. And I don't know whether they'll ever really withdraw from that or not. Maybe they will, but I guess I don't see any real end in sight. I mean, remember Trump said, was it "prohibited" in all capital letters, right? Israel's prohibited from bombing Lebanon anymore. And then they just kept bombing and nothing even changed.

And as far as the negotiations with America and Iran – both sides have 10 or 15 points, maybe they've whittled it down to still four or five, but neither side is willing to budge. They have this idiotic mutual blockade going on in the Gulf. America is not negatively affected by that, but the rest of the world and Iran certainly are. And with where Trump refuses to back down from impossible demands that he has not won on the battlefield at all and with the Iranians being just as stubborn as ever in refusing to conceit. And so, yeah, it's a damn mess. And again, you know, with Israeli sort of, I don't know, kind of a pseudo veto power over any diplomacy that the president might even want to try to engage in, which, it doesn't seem like he's actually really willing to.

Something else brought this up recently, I think it is kind of important, it does go to a lot of Trump's thing – like, you may have never heard of this, but it's just like some pop psychology crap from the American 1960s and I guess 70s or whatever. This guy, his name's right on the tip of my tongue, maybe I'll think of it – it's Norman Vincent Peale. And this guy was like a pseudo preacher of some kind or something. But Trump went to his church, but basically the whole thing was about "the power of positive thinking". And it's almost like, you know, those bumper stickers, "visualize world peace" or whatever. That if you just imagine something a lot and make a lot of magic wishes all the time, make positive pronouncements all the time, then everything will come up lucky, roll the dice and win. And so, Trump, if you look at his business career, he rolls the dice a lot and oftentimes loses, but he doesn't let that get to him. You know what I mean? Whether it's his airline or his steaks or his casinos or whatever. How do you bankrupt a casino?

But the thing is, in the lead up to this war, he had some quick successes. Where, including a year ago with the so-called 12 day war, Iran barely did anything in response to the United States. They hit Tel Aviv, they fired what 14 missiles and as Trump tweeted, "thanks for the warning", they warned in advance that, "look, we're going to fire some missiles toward your base in Qatar, but we're gonna try to miss your guys and you can shoot them down if you

want". Just to prove that they're not complete pacifists here, but also proving that, man, we don't want to fight you, what the hell? We're not doing nothing. So don't, you know? And so that was easy in Trump's mind. He rolled the dice and it worked out all right. You know what I mean? He didn't lose any planes, whatever.

Then you have easy pickings of bombing alleged drug traffickers in their boats in the Caribbean and then the Venezuela operation. And I'm not sure if you and I talked after the Venezuela operation or not, maybe we had a bunch of conversations around that time. I said, "Oh no, that was so easy". I mean, you have to admit the Delta Force or whatever at any given time, the top tier rated bad asses in the world. Them and/or SEAL Team 6, I don't know exactly how you split that, but whatever – those guys can do what they want and they went and got the head of state and his wife in an Afghan-style night raid. Like they were just picking on some peasant in Paktika province. Like, no big deal at all and they got away with it clean. One guy got wounded but was fine. Ultimately it has healed up and is okay I think.

So to Trump, this is like he just through the power of positive thinking rolled the dice and he asked the Delta Force to make his dream come true and they did. They can and did. And then it's just so obvious – you would need to have some deep wisdom to be Donald Trump and not just be really high on the idea that you can do whatever you want. I mean, he's at least tied with a few predecessors for most powerful man in the history of the world, right? I mean he can call for a H-bomb strike on any city on the planet if he wants to. He just announced some new tariffs across the board on 25 countries or whatever it is. I mean this guy's gotten an inordinate amount of power and he's drunk on it. He never drinks alcohol, but he gets high on making a good impression on people or whatever it is – I'm getting praised and doing big risky things.

And so in fact, I think it's probably okay to say that – right? Yeah, it's probably okay. I texted Tucker Carlson and said, Hey, it's so obvious that Venezuela was so easy that one could get really high on the idea that, wow, this is how easy things are in this life or whatever. But when you met with Trump – because I think he just got back from a meeting with Trump – do you get any sense that there's some sobriety there? That maybe you might really be impressed with yourself for 48 hours even, but like, after 72, you've had enough time to stop and reflect that, well, Iran and the Ayatollah and the IRGC ain't Venezuela. That's not exactly the same thing. And the Delta Force is great, nobody's saying we're going to send in special ops guys to kidnap the Ayatollah, right? Or that whoever is his vice president is going to fall right in line the way the vice president in Venezuela did. These are not one-to-one comparisons. These are apples and oranges and totally different things here. And then just Tucker responded to me and said, "no sobriety". That was just it – he met with Trump, and Trump was just like, "man, we kicked Venezuela's ass, so easy, blah, blah blah", and was just so into himself. He wasn't stopping to think that actually, you know what, just because that was easy doesn't mean that this other thing will also be. And he's just ain't that deep of a dude, man. He just ain't.

And so, comes down to it, Netanyahu goes, "look man, Obama ain't man enough to do it. You're the only guy who can do it". And after all, it's just a quick rhetorical trick. They do it to Americans all the time. It's the same thing they did to Trump: look man, we already agreed. You're not gonna let them get a nuclear weapon, right? No, of course not. And we also already agreed that them having a nuclear program at all is the same thing as them building nuclear weapons. Everybody knows that, right? Yeah. Okay, well, there you go. Then we have to go to war. That was it. This is what Joe Kent says. That was how they did it. They just convinced him to move his red line from a nuclear weapon to just a civilian program with any enrichment at all. And that was how he convinced him to do it. And he decided to just roll these dice.

And then now look at him to try to get out of it. We've seen him – I really should follow his Truth Social account more carefully. I only see the worst of it, I guess. But you see him constantly making wild threats, even kind of panicking hysterically and saying, you know, "Britain, France, Germany, China, help! Open the strait for me", right? In the morning I got pro-Trump people going, you don't understand, this is all brilliant for the chess move to screw China out of their hydrocarbons or whatever. And then that same day, he's tweeting "China, please come help open the strait for me". Yeah. This is brilliant 4D chess, dude.

The thing is they weren't going to be able to close the strait because they weren't going to be there anymore. As soon as he killed the Ayatollah, Netanyahu promised the whole government's going to fall apart. The people are going to rise up and there's going to be a friendly regime there. So it's going to be easy, dude, just you wait. So it was a big gamble and it did not work out. So now all he can do is sit here and say, "Through the power of positive thinking, those Iranians, why, they're going to get tired of getting bombed and/or getting sanctioned and/or having their oil blockaded. And they're going to give in pretty soon here. You just wait". In fact, I think there was even one tweet of his where he's like, "why aren't they giving in? We hit them really hard". This guy.

So yeah, anyway, I'm sorry for the incredibly long answer. There's no answer, right? He's completely screwed himself and us. Now, what's funny about it, of course, is that he can just walk away from the thing – again, to quote Joe Kent, to quote Trita Parsi as well – he got his ceasefire already. So just walk away. The American people don't care about the Middle East. We don't need to control the Middle East. Even if it came to a war with China, and we absolutely had to cut off all their hydrocarbons – well, we could just attack their tankers or seize them. There's something the Delta Force can do. Have a helicopter drop guys onto Chinese tankers and seize them on the high seas, fine. But we got to spend tens of trillions of dollars over decades to completely dominate the Middle East in the event of just that contingency? It's ridiculous.

I quote in my book, a guy who is a geographic economist or something like that from Princeton who did this study that said that America had spent 10 trillion dollars between the Jimmy Carter years and the W. Bush years securing Middle Eastern oil when we'd spent like a tenth of that on Middle Eastern oil. It made no sense. And then that didn't include the terror

war years. Or maybe it included W. Bush but it didn't include the Obama years. So, you know, trillions more on securing the soil that, what? To keep it out of Chinese hands? I'm hasten to remind people that America convinced the Chinese to give up Maoist communism and starvation in favor of capitalism in the first place because Maoism was destroying their society, razing it all the way to the ground. People were starving to death by the tens of millions and we told them "you know what you got to do?" America basically promoted the right wing of the Chinese Communist Party and said, "come on, you need property and prices or you're dead". And so they adopted property and prices so now they have some money. So now we're supposed to hate them. Like, would we prefer that they were still Maoist communists all on their knees dying? I don't know. I wouldn't. But anyway.

ZR: Let us take a step back. I mean, you just talked a little bit about the history and you yourself have written yourself very extensively about US foreign policy and American interventions abroad, especially in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and even Ukraine. When it comes to Iran, mainstream coverage often focuses only on the immediate crisis and rarely explains the longer history behind the conflict, especially around Iran's nuclear program. So let us look into that historical context. Why is the US so adamant in preventing Iran from attaining a nuclear weapon? And why do you think this conflict escalated now into an open war, rather than under previous administrations?

SH: Well, the answer to that one is Netanyahu's persuasiveness when it comes to dealing with his friend, Donald Trump. Basically it comes down to this. The kind of post cold war – that is, the cold war with the Soviet Union that ended in the mid 1980s, but then the Soviet Union itself completely dissolved and ceased to exist by Christmas day, 1991. So, the new era begins basically one decade before the end of the 20th century here. And then we've got our 25 years since then, right? So anyway. With the Soviet Union out of the way and China befriended, the question was, well, what do we need the military for?

And the answer was, well, in the case of NATO, for example, they would say "out of area or out of business". We have to find things to do to justify our existence. And one of those things, the way that they framed it was "rogue states with weapons, mass destruction, and the means to deliver them". Now, they could have just said, you know what? Let's just befriend Saddam Hussein and the Ayatollah colony and Kim Jong-il, and we'll just neutralize the threat by normalizing relations. We're the 800 trillion megaton gorilla here, and these are pipsqueak nothing countries, especially back then. We have everything to give and nothing to lose, and so why can't we just solve our problem that way? But the thing is, just like the Cold War before, the arms industries need things to do. They don't want to solve these problems. And so their politicians really don't either.

And then some of these rogue states happen to be threats to Israel, Iraq and Iran especially. And not Iran, but definitely Iraq's quest for weapons of mass destruction, especially in the 1980s, when America supported Saddam Hussein's regime against Iran, he hit them with chemical weapons that America helped him buy from our European friends and also the precursors that he made the chemical weapons out of even help them get samples of anthrax

spores to make biological weapons with, which he never succeeded in, you know, deploying, but still, what the hell? And then he did have a rudimentary nuclear program, which famously the Israelis bombed in 1981 at Osirak, but that was a safeguarded IAEA inspected civilian nuclear reactor.

And when they bombed it, all they did was drive Saddam Hussein's program underground. And he actually did have a rudimentary nuclear weapons program in the 1980s that America didn't know about. Until the aftermath of the first Iraq war when they occupied the south of the country, they found traces of it and tracked it down and said, holy crap. Now he was not necessarily very close to a nuclear weapon. I don't think he had any weapons, enriched uranium yet or whatever, but he was working on trying to build the infrastructure. And this became an issue later when the CIA said well, we don't really think he's making nukes. And then Dick Cheney would say "you don't have to listen to them, they didn't know he was making nukes last time". And that kind of thing. Because it was something that they truly had overlooked and only found out like years into the thing.

But that was the way that they framed it: we cannot let these rogue states – especially after September 11th, which had nothing to do with Iraq, Iran or North Korea or Syria at all. It was terrorists from our allied countries, especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who did that, because we were too close to their country's governments that they hated so much, their own governments. They were not from the axis of evil countries. But anyway, they use September 11th as the excuse to essentially embark on this crusade against "rogue states", as they call them. In other words, non-compliant states with WMDs.

So, what happened was: Saddam Hussein said, "look, man, my hands are up. Here's my 12,000 page dossier. You guys already searched the whole country. You've known since '95 that I destroyed it all by the end of '91. So come on". And the Bush administration just lied and they used Iranian-backed exiles to funnel lies to the Israeli supporting neoconservatives to lie to the American people and the rest of the government into believing this had to be done to somehow preempt Saddam Hussein from attacking us by way of his relationship with al-Qaeda. Such a bunch of crap. I sound foolish even just rehearsing the lie of the day that like this was actually how they sold that war. I'm sorry, don't hold it against me. That's how stupid it was, but they succeeded in that. .

So then, the North Koreans raced toward a nuke. And that's a whole other subject. I can talk about that if you want. But they withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty at the end of 2002 and kicked the inspectors out and essentially beat their chest and announced, we're making nukes now. And America was on its way to Baghdad so there's nothing they were going to do about that. So they got their pile of nukes and they've been safe ever since. Kim Jong Il's son, Kim Jong Un is now in charge and his daughter will take over from him because he's sitting on a pile of A-bombs. If anybody takes them out, it'll be a contest between the Communist Party and the military there, but no outside force, really.

So Saddam Hussein said, look, man, I'm not doing nothing. And they rolled over his ass anyway. The Libyans said – because see, people always really exaggerate this – Gaddafi gave up his weapons of mass destruction. Well, what he actually had was warehouses full of old junk that he had bought from AQ Khan, the Pakistani arms dealers, nuclear arm suppliers, or nuclear equipment suppliers. You know, garage sale stuff. So it was just a bunch of wooden crates full of a bunch of stuff, but he didn't have the engineers or the scientists or the capability in Libya to develop an indigenous nuclear program of any kind. And he hadn't even tried cause he knew he couldn't.

So what he essentially gave W. Bush was a photo opportunity – we got some aluminum tubes and some potential centrifuge equipment here. When, in fact, Gaddafi had been trying to suck up to the United States and come in from the cold since at least 1996, and that's according to an article by former Senator and presidential candidate Gary Hart, that he wrote in *The Atlantic*. I don't remember when he wrote it, but he said he was in Athens, Greece, when a Gaddafi agent approached him in 1996, begging to come in from the cold and try to normalize relations and Bush just tried to take credit for that, make a big PR move. In fact, Gaddafi really gave this as a PR win to Bush. Because then Bush was able to pretend that see, because we attacked Iraq, that put the fear of God into Gaddafi. So that was when he decided to fall in line, which wasn't even really true.

But anyway. And then the Iranians position was: one, they're a bigger country, much harder to invade. So they got that going for them. But then secondly, they said, "listen, we're members in good standing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We have the quote unquote – this isn't me, this is in the treaty – the unalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology as long as we don't make nuclear weapons. And we've got an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency that they can inspect and safeguard all of our nuclear facilities and use of nuclear material. So you have no pretext for war here. Everybody knows it. All this is above board. And they did not have a history of Saddam Hussein's secret nuclear weapons program or chemical weapons program or biological weapons program, or anything like that. They said everybody knows what our nuclear program is. And the books are open and the inspectors are on site. They got cameras. They got seals and scales and everything that they need to verify, with their instruments, the non diversion of nuclear material.

And so what's going on there, right? I find myself in the position of if you boil it down unfairly arguing their side of the argument here, but that's not really what it is. I'm just arguing against the lies and just telling the truth about what the actual context is. But I'm never asking anyone to be naive about this. If the Iranians want to be coy and say, oh, who, me? Well, that doesn't impress me and shouldn't impress you. What they're clearly doing here, and sometimes they would say this, but I think not very often. I think mostly they would even deny this. But I still believe that what they're doing was they're creating a latent nuclear deterrent. They're saying, we could make nukes. We'd master the fuel cycle. We know how to enrich uranium, we know how to convert uranium from metal to gas and then enrich it to a higher percentage of U-235 and then how to convert it back to metal again, whether to make

fuel rods or worst case scenario to make nuclear bomb warheads at a higher percentage of enrichment. Typically above 90% enrichment would be weapons grade.

So what they were saying was, look man, we essentially have bullets in one pocket and a revolver in the other, but we're not doing anything with them. So let's you and me not get in a fist fight and escalate this thing. That was essentially their position. They were trying to take the middle ground between Saddam and Gaddafi's helplessness and Kim Jong-Il's nuclear weapons threat. And I think probably because they reasoned, and probably correctly, that unlike North Korea, America will bomb the crap out of them before they're able to achieve nuclear weapons capability. So if they break out, they may not make it – break out means choose to make a nuclear weapon, kick the inspectors out and go for it, right? They might not finish the job before they're all killed dead by American strikes. And so it makes sense in a way for them to just sort of have this latent deterrent that says look I'm not making nukes so you have no good reason to attack me. But if you do attack me, well, then I might make nukes. And just leave it at that. Because if they actually went ahead and raced toward a nuke, they might not get there.

So the Israeli position then was, look at them, they're making nukes. Get them Uncle Sam. You bomb them for me. We can't let them get a nuclear weapon. They're clearly developing nuclear weapons technology. That cannot be allowed to stand. This goes back to the W. Bush years, at least. I mean, even before that, but they actually had enrichment centrifuges installed in 2005 and they had a temporary moratorium while they were negotiating with the Europeans on America's behalf for, I guess, two years under the additional protocol. That was for, I think two or three years. And then they're really up and going and their enrichment by – and I need to go back and recheck this timeline, I'm sorry – but I know they were spinning some centrifuges '06. And they had a temporary moratorium and then they went back again. But they clearly mastered the fuel cycle and their potential ability to enrich up to weapons grade by mid to late Bush years, second term W. Bush years.

And so Ehud Olmert, who was the president or the prime minister of Israel then, tried to get W. Bush to attack them and he wouldn't do it. And W. Bush famously, the CIA put it out in NIE in November of 2007, not just the CIA, the National Intelligence Council, all intelligence agencies agreed, that they're not making nukes, that they abandoned any research into nuclear weapons in '03 and they had not made the political decision to make nukes. Bush had already told Olmert no in the spring, so I don't know what real difference it made there. Maybe he did have a plan to go ahead and attack him in '08, but Bush had based down his own vice president and other hawks in the administration in '07, as well as the Israelis in '07, before this. Because this wasn't until November of '07.

But when it came out, it did really undermine the case for war because it made huge headlines and it was really the CIA and friends pitting themselves against the hawks in the White House. So it was a very political document in that sense, too. It was totally true, but it was true up their nose. You know what I mean? And Bush complained about this in his memoir and said, how was I supposed to start a war against a country when my own

intelligence agencies say they aren't making nuclear weapons? So he didn't think that he could get away with it. Like, we might try to conflate these things, but come on, what are you gonna do? The CIA just said that they're not pursuing nuclear weapons, so my pretext for war is fatally undermined here. And by the way, in that part of the book, he's talking about bowing and scraping before his Royal Highness, the King of Saudi Arabia and explaining to him why he's so sorry that he can't go ahead and attack Iran now. But he could have swapped that out with Olmert either way. It's just so funny to imagine Bush bowing, scraping before this alleged royalty and whatever when Bush has got pretty blue blood himself.

So in the Obama years – first of all Netanyahu becomes prime minister again just right after Obama. He gets elected, there's a little delay, but he becomes prime minister again I think right after Obama's inauguration. And so here's the thing: I hate Obama so much, for so many things and for so many reasons, but I can't help but feel sorry for the guy here. I mean imagine being the president of the United States of America and then right as you get in there Netanyahu comes back in as Prime Minister of Israel. Like, oh, man, God, that would suck so bad. Talk about just walking around with a millstone around your neck every day. In fact, there's a quote from Obama where he's on a hot microphone with the president of France, I believe Sarkozy at the time. They're behind a curtain and he thinks his microphone is off but he says to the whole crowd, "you think you hate him. I've got to deal with him every day." You know what I mean? I never sympathize with Obama except on that. Like, God, that would suck. That would just be an absolute nightmare, my God. I would just give a speech and just demand new elections in Israel. "I hereby hate this prime minister and want someone to rid me of him, please". And then see what happens after that, maybe run around in a Kevlar helmet for a little while. But anyway.

So Netanyahu comes in and Netanyahu is, I guess, semi seriously threatening? Here's the thing. I thought at the time that he's bluffing. But I know that a lot of people didn't. A lot of very serious people did not think he was bluffing. And including in Washington D.C., they didn't think he was bluffing. Netanyahu was saying, I'm going to go ahead and start this war, I'm not going to tolerate this nuclear program. And then the idea was, and I guess the intelligence estimates were, that if he did that, Iran would hit back at American assets. And particularly, we still had thousands of troops in Iraq, tens of thousands of troops in Afghanistan. As well as everything that we've seen get hit all up and down the Gulf in our modern time here. So they didn't want to do that.

And the idea was that Israel was going to basically drag us into this war. And this has actually been proposed in the Bush years by Dick Cheney's aide, David Wurmser, the author of *The Clean Break Strategy* in the spring of 2007, he talked about making a deal with the Israelis that they would attack Iran first and force Iran to retaliate against American targets and do an end run around George Bush and force him into the war. Which they ended up not doing, I guess because he blabbed that too loudly at the American Enterprise Institute and it hit the papers, so they kind of backed down from that or Bush maybe shouted them down, I don't know. But that idea had been floated before of this treason even within the Bush White House of getting Americans killed in order to force the war.

So there were people who were really taking this seriously during early Obama. And so what he did was he said, look man – and he was serious about this, as I was pointing out to Tom Woods in an interview the other day – he gave an interview to Jeffrey Goldberg in the Atlantic for one example of many things. But it's called "as president, I don't bluff". Jeffrey Goldberg – who is like Israel's most trusted hack, the editor of the Atlantic and a former Israeli prison guard, a really bad guy – Obama is telling Goldberg, would you please tell the Israelis that you believe me? That I'm serious and that they should trust me? I really, really, really mean it: if Iran breaks out toward a nuclear weapon, I will goddamn attack them and I will prevent that from happening no matter what it takes. But let me handle this my way, which is I think I can get a deal. So that was why he pushed so hard for that JCPOA.

Now, as silly as this sounds, at that time, the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the Iranian safeguards agreement under that treaty might as well have not existed. They were just not part of the debate at all. The question was what are we going to do about Iran's illicit nuclear weapons program? Their secret nuclear weapons program. And it was just all BS, all the time. There is nowhere in the signal – even though they would talk about the IAEA on another level of news, it would be written in the papers or whatever. It just had nothing to do with the dialog around what's happening here. The idea, if you weren't paying close attention, you would think that the poor helpless international community was just flying blind here and as far as anyone knew, they are on the verge of exploding their first H-bomb. Or something. You know what I mean? And that they're marching toward a nuke. They must be stopped. And no amount of articles at antiwar.com about how not true any of that was, was really enough to quench that narrative, to stifle that.

So what it took was Obama doing the JCPOA. The JCPOA, in a way, I mean it did things, but it did not change the nature of Iran's program. What it really did was it changed the nature of public relations and the discussion around Iran's program in the West. Because once they did pass the deal – well now you can't deny they're being inspected. Absolutely, in and out both ears. They're being inspected everywhere. They've restricted their program. They've poured concrete into their heavy water reactor. They've turned off a bunch of their centrifuges. Everybody knows that now. So it was almost like they had just signed the NPT and a safeguards agreement and oh, geez, I guess now we know their facilities are inspected – well, we already did, but thanks very much. They added additional protocols and subsidiary arrangements to their IAEA safeguard agreement. That's really all it amounted to. But they did severely restrict their program, roll many pieces of it back, including, as I said, poured concrete into their heavy water reactor and never turned it on. And they expanded the inspections regime greatly.

Again, Israel is saying: America, attack them. Bush and Obama are saying, well, we're not going to attack them, but we promise we will if they make a nuke. And now Obama's saying, I'm going to go ahead and make a deal unlike W. Bush, I'm going to go ahead and make a deal that's going to extra double verify that they're not making nukes. And then at least the way that they negotiated the deal was by the American experts calculations – if Iran broke out and did try to make a nuke, it would take them at least a year to be done. So we would have

time to try to stop them diplomatically even at that point, when we surely would have time to start an aggressive war against them in order to prevent that outcome. I'm not endorsing that, I'm just explaining that was the frame, that was: we're going to restrict their possession of a stockpile of enriched uranium and restrict the amount of centrifuges that are up and running and whatever in a way that if they did break out, they try to get them all up and running again and they tried to go ahead and do all these things, it would take them a year to have not even a finished warhead, actually. The breakout time is calculated as when they would have enough fissile material for one bomb. Never mind the engineers and the metal making a perfect device out of it. So that would give them plenty of time to attack Iran if they broke the deal and tried to make a nuke.

So then in Iran's end of the standoff, they were essentially saying, see? We're not making nukes, so you have no right to attack us. But this is totally contrary to what Benjamin Netanyahu wants. He wants regime change. He wants an end to this regime that poses a threat as Israel's strongest strategic rival with or without nuclear weapons. And so, in fact, because of him and his friends who helped lie America into the Iraq war, too, now Iran has more influence in Iraq than ever before. They're much stronger than they were before he helped to do that. So now he has even more reason to want regime change in Iran for one thing. So this is his pretext for war.

So he convinced Trump in his first term in 2018 to pull out of the JCPOA just so that they could say that those inspections weren't taking place. And that those restrictions on the program were not being enforced, which they weren't. And in fact, if you check the JCPOA deal of 2015, you'll see that it actually allows for Iran to violate some of the restrictions in the deal if America breaks the deal first. This was something that they had anticipated. So it meant that they could violate some of the deal without violating the deal itself wholesale. And the deal, itself, by the way, was with the entire UN Security Council, not just the United States. So they still stayed in the deal and they didn't break the deal just because Donald Trump did back in 2018.

But then what happened was, the Israelis kept the pressure up and they did some assassinations, more assassinations of nuclear scientists and especially culminating in the assassination of a guy named Fakhrizadeh who was the head of the Iranian nuclear program in late November of 2020, after the election of 2020. And only then did they announce that they were going to now start enriching up to 20% uranium-235 again, which they need for their medical isotope reactor, but also is a bargaining chip in negotiations. You guys don't like us enriching even to 3.6% for electricity – well, now we're going to bother you more and turn it up to 20. That's what you get for killing our guy. Right?

Then in April, the Israelis bombed an electricity facility at Natanz. And it was after that, that they said, okay, now we're going to reach up to 60 %. So you and your audience, I'm sure have heard a lot of hype about Iran enriching up to 60 %. They have no legitimate use for 60 % uranium-235. Why are they enriching that high? Well, I would just point you to the timeline. They announced their intention to do it and they started to do it very soon after in

2021. Which is, first of all, three years after Trump tore up the JCPOA. Then, only then, did they do this. And again, in direct response to the sabotage at the Natanz above ground electricity facility there.

But then also that's still four solid years before the war last June. And they never went up higher than 60. So you have to ask yourself, why didn't they go higher than 60? People would go and try to obfuscate this. You hear the war party stating all the time: well, only nuclear weapons states have 60 % enriched uranium. Marco Rubio said: the only countries that have 60 % enriched uranium have nuclear weapons. Let's see. Are any of those nuclear weapons made out of 60 % enriched uranium? No. So what's he talking about? Right? You can see how he's kind of obfuscating there. He's trying to not quite outright lie, but he's trying to lead you to believe that this proves something. What other explanation could there possibly be for them enriching up to 60 % unless they're going to make a nuke? But then it ought to occur to every consumer of news on this planet, well, why stop at 60 then? Why not go up to 94 and say that's what you get? See? If that's what they were doing if they were making atom bombs that's what you need to do. Potentially, they could make one out of 80 % enriched uranium but it'd be much bigger and much more difficult to detonate and much more difficult to deliver. They're almost always above 90 % of enriched uranium when it's an uranium type fission bomb.

The answer is because it was a bargaining chip. They're trying to get us back into negotiations. They weren't trying to make nuclear weapons. They're just trying to make the leaders of the Western European and United States worry enough that, you know what? We ought to just go ahead and get back in the deal or something that looks a lot like it. And I think they probably thought they would have more luck with the Biden administration than they did. The Biden people talked to them, but just barely, between Trump terms here. They did not truly seek to get back in the deal. Which it was Obama's guys that did the deal. Biden was his vice president and his number one and two guys are Jake Sullivan and Anthony Blinken, who both participated in the creation of the deal in the first place. I don't think they were pivotal to it, but they were part of it. And so why didn't they just get back into the damn deal? Especially when the narrative about Trump won was that this guy's crazy, he's a Russian spy, he's whatever, whatever. He's the Tasmanian devil up there. He never belonged. And so, well, if that's true, then just get back in the damn deal. His tearing it up was totally an aberration, right? But nope, they didn't do that. They kept up the sanctions, which, you know, Obama, Trump, Biden never gave him the sanctions relief from our part of the deal in the first place, by the way. But Trump increased them, and Biden kept increasing them too, his whole presidency long for four years.

And so then when, when Trump came back in, it was simply a matter of Netanyahu convincing him that look, man, the same thing they tried to convince Bush and Obama before him and presumably Biden before that for them to have a civilian nuclear program is just a stage in their nuclear weapons program. It is a nuclear weapons program. They got all their 60 %, they could have a nuke in three weeks, they could have a nuke in three months. They could have a nuke and just make up a time period. It's like the casualties in January in the

riots in Iran – just make up whatever number the space and time that they could have it that sounds "soon". And then just say, we just can't tolerate that. You'll even hear Trump saying, no nuclear, they can't have nuclear, right? Cause he's himself conflating a civilian nuclear program with nuclear weapons. And he's just saying one thing is the other thing, and that's the deal. Now that's not true, but that's how the Israelis convinced Trump to move his red line. And that's what led to this war.

ZR: Scott Horton, author and director of the Libertarian Institute, thank you so much for this detailed history and context that you won't hear in the mainstream media. I'll be sure to get in touch with you soon and continue the discussion.

SH: Thank you.

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 and nonprofit journalism that doesn't take any money from corporations or governments. You will now see a PayPal QR code appear on the screen. If you scan it with your phone's camera, you will be able to donate it to us without any hassle. I thank you all for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.

END

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