

FROM IRAN: My first Report

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Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Good day, this is Dimitri Lascaris coming to you from Tehran, the capital of Iran, on July 2nd, 2026, for Reason2Resist. I arrived in Tehran just a few hours ago. I flew in from Istanbul on an aircraft operated by an Iranian airline company. And the flight was quite full. And as far as I could tell, the vast majority of the passengers were Iranian nationals, many of whom I expect would be coming back in order to participate in the funeral of the slain Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, which will take place in several cities, including the capital, over the next week. Also on that flight were a number of independent foreign journalists, including the highly capable geopolitical analyst Patrick Henningsen. Patrick is American, but he spends much of his time in the United Kingdom. I had the opportunity to interview Patrick on this programme about two or three weeks ago about the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran, but this was the first time that I had the opportunity to actually meet him in person. We had a very interesting chat on the way to the hotel where we're currently staying from the airport. The flight in was unusual in one respect and that was that that was probably the oldest commercial airliner or aeroplane of any type that I've ever travelled on. It was an Airbus 300 which was manufactured by the European aircraft manufacturer Airbus between 1971 and 2007, so it was taken out of production about 20 years ago. This aircraft was so old that it still had ashtrays instead of having television screens behind every seat, there was a big old television screen right at the front of the first cabin and I have to say that there were a couple of times I thought to myself as that a plane was coming into Iran, whether the crews had managed to keep it in good shape given the terrible sanctions that have been inflicted upon this country. And things got a little bit nervous when we were approaching the airport in Tehran because for some reason, which wasn't explained to us, the pilot ended up circling the airport for about 30 to 45 minutes. And when he came in, there was quite a bit of turbulence. But at the end of the day, he and his crew members capably and safely delivered us to our destination.

Now when I got to the hotel, it quickly became apparent to me from my discussions with my Iranian colleagues – and by the way, I was greeted at the airport by a number of the

journalists, the Iranian journalists with whom I travelled across Iran in March during the hot phase of this war, I think it's fair to say that that was an experience that brought us very close together because it was a very dangerous experience. Every city we went to was being bombed repeatedly. And they took excellent care of me and Tim Anderson and our colleague Ahmad from Propaganda & Co. And then when I arrived at the hotel, I met yet other Iranian journalists who had been with us on that cross-country tour in late March. I was very relieved and happy to find them all in good health and safe. And they were in remarkably good spirits, I think, because for the time being, this war, as horrible as it has been, as criminal as it has been, has turned out extraordinarily well for Iran under all the circumstances. That doesn't mean the war is over not by a long shot but I think that they were all exhibiting relief that they have managed to reach this point. In any case the security situation was explained to me to be very very tight. In fact this didn't happen on any of my prior trips but I was asked not to leave the hotel this evening, not even to go out for a walk. Again, this restriction was never placed upon us, and they asked us politely, and of course I'm going to honour their request. And we were told the reason for this is because millions upon millions of people are coming into the city, and the Iranian authorities are understandably very concerned that the Americans and the Israelis have cooked up some nefarious scheme to disrupt all of this and perhaps bring great harm to a great many people. And in fact just today an Iranian military commander warned the United States and Israel against any attack on the country as it prepares for the state funeral of the murdered Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. A military commander by the name of Ali Abdollahi was quoted in the Israeli press as stating: "We warned the enemies of Iran, especially the US and the Zionist regime, to avoid any miscalculation and to think about the harsh retaliation our Armed Forces would make to any threat and aggression against our country." And as I say, that warning was powerful enough to have attracted the attention of the Israeli media.

Now there are two competing narratives, of course, about the slain Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. On the one hand, there is the narrative promulgated by Western governments and Israel that the Supreme Leader was supremely evil. And that has been drummed into our heads relentlessly for decades, the entire time that he has in fact acted as the Supreme Leader. But there is, believe it or not, another narrative embraced by hundreds of millions of people around the world, and principally, but not exclusively in the Shia Muslim community. And that narrative is that Imam Khamenei was a paragon of the resistance to Western aggression and imperialism, and also a spiritual figure exhibiting great wisdom. And this is, I'm going to read to you, an explanation of this school of thought published recently by the New Arab, which, by the way, is a Qatari media outlet, not an Iranian one. And they wrote in an article published in March of this year, shortly after the murder of Imam Khamenei, as follows: "The killing of Iran's Supreme Leader has triggered an immediate and emotionally charged response from Shia outside Iran, from senior clerics and militant leaders across the Muslim world to protesters on the streets of South Asian and Middle Eastern cities. While Tehran has entered a formal transition period, reactions beyond its borders reflect the extent to which Khamenei was seen not only as Iran's leader, but as a central political and symbolic figure for parts of the wider Shia world." And then the article asks: "What did Khamenei represent beyond Iran? Khamenei's influence extended well beyond Iran's state structure as Supreme

Leader under the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih guardianship of the jurists. He combined religious authority with ultimate political control over the Islamic Republic. While not universally regarded as the most senior Marja' figures in Shia Islam, he was the most powerful Shia cleric in the world by virtue of his constitutional authority. Politically, he presided over and shaped what has come to be known as the Axis of Resistance, a loose but coordinated network of Iran-aligned movements and armed groups including Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iraqi Shia militias, the now overthrown Assad regime and Yemen's Ansar Allah."

So I can also attest to the fact, as can many people, that the positive view of Ali Khamenei and the reverence in which he was held is not confined to the Shia Muslim world. I've encountered many members of the Sunni Muslim community who speak highly of him and honour his sacrifice, who readily embrace the characterisation of the slain Supreme Leader as a martyr, someone who died in the cause of justice. And there are, in fact, a significant number of people, even in the Western world, who honour Ali Khamenei's sacrifice. Including people who don't profess to be religious at all. I've encountered many such people in the course of my work as an independent journalist and as an activist. Now, so powerful was the feeling for Ali Khamenei in the Shia Muslim world that immediately following his murder, the Shia population, many members of it in neighbouring Pakistan, took to the streets in protest that turned violent. This was in March of this year. Shia Muslims, by the way, constitute an estimated ten to 13 percent of the world's Muslim population, numbering approximately 250 million faithful followers as of 2026. In Pakistan, ten to 15 percent of the population is Shia, amounting to approximately 30 million Shia Muslims. And as I mentioned in the aftermath of his murder, protesters were killed in Pakistan. A number of them, in fact, broke through a barricade that blocked the US consulate in Karachi and they were gunned down in cold blood, apparently by Pakistani security forces.

Now, if you are yourself of the view or more inclined to the negative characterisation of the slain Supreme Leader that characterises Western discourse about him, I would ask you this question: Why do you believe that Israel and or the United States murdered him on February 28th of this year? Was it really to deliver democracy and human rights to the people of Iran? Does anybody seriously contend that in this part of the world especially, in Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, any part of West Asia, and indeed even in the broader world, even in the West itself, that the United States government and Israel prioritise democracy and human rights? If that were true, why did they not only murder the Supreme Leader himself but also his daughter and his son-in-law and his 14 year old grandchild. You know I've seen countless articles written about his assassination in the Western corporate media, I've heard countless talking heads on Western corporate television stations talk about his assassination and they almost never mentioned the fact that these genocidal monsters killed his 14 year old granddaughter at the same time as they killed the Supreme Leader. But quite apart from all of that, the United States backs in every conceivable way regimes in the Arab world that can only be described as dictatorships; whether we're talking about Egypt or Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and on and on. And look at what they're doing in the Americas, Donald Trump in Latin America, how they're openly interfering in the elections there. And how Trump is doing everything he can to install far right radical Zionists

in power in countries that have long suffered from US imperialism. So no sane person with an ounce of objectivity would accept the narrative that the Americans and or Israelis murdered this 86 year old leader, spiritual leader of Iran and also constitutional leader of Iran, along with his 14 year old granddaughter, because they wanted to bring the blessings of peace, democracy, and justice to the Iranian people.

I think we all know why they killed him. Why they killed was because he was the leader, at least in effect, if not the titular leader of this regional resistance movement. And it has been the most effective resistance movement to Western imperialism and domination and Israeli aggression that this part of the world has seen in a very long time probably in fact ever since the creation of Israel; that's why they killed him. They killed them because he was determined to do something about the genocide in Gaza amongst other things. Not just oppose imperialism against his own country. If you have an ounce of objectivity and you understand how the leadership of these two genocidal regimes, Israel and the United States actually think, you will have no trouble accepting that he was wiped off the face of the earth along with his granddaughter because he was leading a resistance movement against their aggression and not because of any concerns they might have had over human rights abuses or democracy and that's not to say that there are no criticisms you can bring against the governments he led or the reign of Ali Khamenei.

Now while I'm in Iran over the next ten days or so we will try to give you as accurate a sense as we can of how the people of Iran are responding to the death of the Supreme Leader and why they're responding in the way that they are. But we'll try to do much more than that, after all there continues to be a criminal war of aggression being waged on Iran that existentially threatens not only the people of this country but also the global economy. That in and of itself is more than enough reason to come here again. This is my third visit in about 14 months and I'm really gratified to have the opportunity to be able to report on the ground from this critically important theatre of conflict at this particular time. Now, on that note, let me turn briefly to the all-important question of the Strait of Hormuz. First, I took a look at the ever-reliable, or at least I believe it to be reliable, marinetraffic.com, which aggregates information about marine traffic around the world from numerous reputable sources. And what it showed at the particular moment that I checked it out was that there were a mere five tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. And four of them were Iran-flagged tankers or tankers that are associated with Iran. One of them is called the Humanity, which bears the flag of Iran. The Serena, another one, also bears the flag of Tehran. The GAZ GMS, it bears the Panamanian flag but has been accused by US authorities of transporting Iranian oil. And then a tanker called the Selina which I believe is also flagged by Iran. The fifth tanker that was transiting at that moment was entering the Strait from the Sea of Oman and that tanker called the Peru Prosperity is said to be destined for Iraq. There were no tankers as far as I could tell that were coming to or from the Gulf Autocracies at the particular moment that I checked marinetraffic.com.

Now this is consistent with what we've seen over the past several days, ever since the most recent ceasefire violations by the Trump regime, speaking here specifically of the bombing of

targets in Iran on the southern coast of Iran and on islands in the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday night of last week and Friday night, the second of those attacks being more intensive. And of course, there are the ongoing violations that Trump is committing by enabling Israel to continue its genocidal rampage in Lebanon, and in Palestine, and, in addition, the ongoing failure of the Trump regime to pay any part of Iran's stolen assets back to Iran. All of these are obligations under the MOU, as is the obligation to refrain from threatening Iran. And that's something that Trump has done repeatedly since the MOU is signed, and has done so using genocidal rhetoric. So it seems to me quite clear that the Iranian government and military are going to not shut down the Strait, but they're going to throttle traffic significantly to keep the pressure on Donald Trump to finally comply with at least some of his obligations under the MOU. But they're not going so far as to provoke Trump into reimposing the blockade, because right now they are getting a lot of oil out of the Gulf. As I mentioned, those tankers in the Strait are either flagged by Iran or affiliated with Iran and undoubtedly Iran's government, for both social purposes, you know, reconstruction purposes and for military purposes, could use the billions of dollars of revenue that it is generating by the resumption of its sales of oil.

So I also want to remark that I've seen a lot of conflicting information on social media from people, even people who are acknowledged to be experts in the oil industry, about just how much oil is getting out of the Strait of Hormuz. It certainly does seem that there has been a considerable increase in the amount of oil getting out the Strait of Hormuz since the MOU was signed and that's only to be expected because there was almost no oil getting out beforehand and there is a huge backlog of oil. There are ships that have been sitting there loaded with crude oil for three months and their crews are exhausted, they want to go home, the tankers that have been sitting there have been of absolutely no use to their owners, the owners have had to continue to pay those crews to man these ships, has had to continue to pay for insurance, has to incur some energy costs in order to keep the ships running, at least at the level where the oil can be preserved and the crews can function. So, the ship owners whose ships have been stranded there for months are undoubtedly desperate to get them out. And so there's inevitably been, since the MOU is signed, a surge relative to what was going on before oil exiting the Gulf. But the all-important question is what happens when that oil runs out? How much oil is going to then emerge from the Gulf? And furthermore, and related to that, how many tankers are going to risk going back into the Gulf once the Gulf has been cleared out of the backlog. I would suggest to you that there is going to be a lot of hesitation on the part of shipping companies around the world to send their tankers back into the Gulf after so many of them had been stranded there for months, given the current conditions. And what are the current conditions? The current conditions are: Number one, there is no military solution to it adding control of the Strait of Hormuz. Again, we saw this on Thursday and Friday. The American government provoked this latest round of hostilities by trying to open up a sea lane along the coast of Oman. And by all indications, that short-lived sea lane has been completely shut down. And the ships that are going through are going through a sea-lane that is much closer to the Iranian coast and is easier for the Iranians to control. So the shooting stopped, the status quo has remained, yet again we have seen that there's no military solution to this problem.

Number two, not only does Iran have the capability to maintain control of the Strait of Hormuz no matter what the United States does, but in addition it has the motivation to throttle traffic through the Strait of Hormuz as long as the Trump and Netanyahu regimes continue to threaten Iran and the Trump regime continues to flagrantly violate its obligations under the MOU. And finally, there is just the overall risk point profile of the region. There is way too much risk involved in going through the Strait of Hormuz right now. Especially when you see every few days a resumption of attacks on non-compliant shipping and the bombing of Iran by American forces. These are very expensive vessels. They're not easily replaced. Their cargo is also extremely valuable. And who's going to want to send their ships through the Strait of Hormuz when there is so much uncertainty, so much danger as there is at this time. I dare say that you aren't going to see anything close to a resumption of the pre-war levels of traffic through the Strait of Hormuz until there has been a permanent peace deal negotiated, if ever there will be one, and there has been a significant period of time elapsed, I'm talking here at least weeks if not months, during which there's no shooting whatsoever and no threats of violence whatsoever. And there's a management scheme that has been put in place, and the belligerents, including the Gulf autocracies, are essentially in agreement with that management scheme, whatever it may be. So not to harp on this, but it has to be repeated because it is something that is of great importance to people around the world, this oil crisis is far from over because this war is far from over. And as the days ahead proceed, we will do our best to give you a sense of just what the thinking is of the Iranian government with respect to the MOU and how the Iranian people themselves feel about it. I was just interviewed in the lobby of the hotel by Press TV by a capable interviewer I've been interviewed by in the past and this was a question he raised with me himself on Iranian television. There's a divide in this country about whether we should be negotiating with the Trump regime. And there are people who say it's a fool's errand and others who think that the negotiating team is on the right track. What do you think about all of that? And I told them essentially what I've been saying to my own audience, well, not essentially, I told him exactly what I'd been saying to my audience for the past several weeks. In any case, that's my initial report from Iran. Tomorrow, after we do some more interviews in the morning we will be going out into the streets and I will have my next report to you sometime during the day, eastern time on July 3rd. Signing off from Tehran on July 2nd, 2026.

END

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