

Alastair Crooke: Iranian Troops SHATTER US-Israeli War Plan

Renowned analyst Alastair Crooke brings his decades of diplomatic and intelligence experience in West Asia to break down reports of a coming Israeli attack greenlit by Trump as Iran amasses troops on its borders for a major ground response. Yemen is hitting the nerve center of the petrodollar hard, and the Saudi regime is on brink of collapse despite US and Israeli support. Alastair Crooke is a former British diplomat and the Founder of the Conflicts Forum based in Beirut.

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#Danny

Welcome, everyone. Welcome back to the show. It's Danny Haiphong with Alistair Crooke, former UK diplomat and geopolitical analyst, author. To go over the latest developments, Alistair, I wanted to begin with this report. So Iran is saying that, you know, it has mobilized 420,000 troops in recent weeks as part of its army. It has warned the United States and Israel that if a strike is to occur, that it will potentially consider committing ground incursions on neighboring countries. Now, this comes as the United States and Israel have been in deep talks about potential renewed strikes on Iran.

Netanyahu, according to one U.S. official, said that he... An American official told the media that Netanyahu spoke to Trump about it several times in recent days, saying that Trump reported to Netanyahu that he could move forward and prepare without any real commitment, but that could mean any moment. And according to Israeli media, the same reports have been circulating that this strike could come before Israeli elections. Readiness drills, according to open-source intelligence, have been happening over Syria and Iraq, with Israeli fighter jets surging in that area. And Donald Trump himself said at an Alaska rally yesterday, "Wait and see what we do to Iran. Wait till you see what we do to them, because we sort of had it."

You know, we've sort of had it. This is all coming as pressure on energy markets is rapidly escalating, as not only is Iran continuing to enforce its control of the Strait of Hormuz, but Yemen has retaliated against Saudi aggression on Hodeidah oil sites with new strikes on Aramco facilities in Saudi Arabia. Alistair, what do you make of these reports about this renewed and coming escalation against Iran by the U.S. and Israel, Iran's potential response, and where it fits in the overall geopolitical landscape right now, as this region is heating up even further, with it seeming like no end in sight for the U.S., Israel, and now we have Saudi Arabia, of course, there as well? To you.

#Alastair Crooke

I think one way or another, we are heading towards a big escalation in the region, which will affect much of the region, if not pretty well all of the region. And so I think, yes, it is quite likely this is going to happen. And certainly there are lots of indicators that Iran are preparing very much for that. They're doing all sorts of exercises. There are exercises taking place. They have been trialing new missile systems, doing exercises, trialing these missile systems. They are doing training for this mobilization, which you referred to, which was to create a total of a million-man or woman force that were to be started on exercises in Tel Aviv.

I mean, in Tehran, there are posters up advising people to go and learn how to use a gun, how to also use a MANPAD against aircraft. And there are lots of signs that people are doing this and are taking action, and are joining up, and preparation is underway. Mobile energy systems have been deployed to airports and to defense structures around Iran. So a lot of preparation for a major war is taking place in Iran. We can see that. What about on the American side? Well, there is a lot of aircraft movement, but we've been saying that for some time now. It seems to be a bit repetitive. A lot of them are tanker aircraft.

Most of the fleet, I mean, that's the carriers, are really far distant now. They're standing off about at least 100 kilometers off the shore now, which means their ability to use their deck fighters is quite limited because it would require some of them to be refueled before striking their targets, because this is beyond their capabilities, their capacity for a deck-launched aircraft. So there are all sorts of signs of something being prepared. What's happening in Israel? Well, in Israel, as you know, the election is going ahead. It's very fraught, and Netanyahu is relying heavily on some sort of incident in this period.

There's a lot of claims that if there is a conflict or if Israel is engaged in the war in some way, then the elections will be postponed or cancelled. I think you recall, I think I mentioned before, Netanyahu actually got an agreement from Likud that if there was what he called a security tension in the region, then the elections could be cancelled. So he also is very desperate about this election. It's really on a knife edge which way it's going to go. It's not clear yet. He might prevail, or he might just simply be the biggest party amongst many, but not with a majority. There's a lot of to-ing and fro-ing of parties into alliances with each other.

But basically, if I were to sum up the situation, whatever the outcome of the election, the polls all show that Israel is heading to the far right. I don't normally like using the term far right or far left because I think they're abused, but in this case, I think it's appropriate. We're talking about people on the right in Israel that are very far right, and they seem to be gaining support amongst the public. And they may do well in this election. And that portends more problems. Already we've been told that Israel has warned that if there is, in any event, an attack by Iran or from Israel on Iran, which provokes a retaliation, then they are going to go into Lebanon, and they are going to not only take the areas they already have, but they're going to take more areas.

They're going to extend the area under Israeli occupation. So overall, a sort of sense of great—the situation in Saudi is bad and getting worse. The Ansar Allah, if you like, the forces from Sana'a, have not only destroyed—are on the brink of going in and have actually slightly encircled Taiz. It's a sort of gateway town on the west, which has mountains around it, but it is a gateway to the south, as well as the gateway to the interior. So if they take that, it will stop, if you like, the logistics and munitions going to the forces near the Gulf of Aden. And these forces, the same, if you like, Ansar Allah forces, have now dispersed completely. The gathering that was proclaimed about retaking Bab al-Mandab, they've been knocked for six and are out of the equation.

They've largely gone. But what's happened, and this is important, is that now Ansar Allah also, their forces are on that coastline near Aden. So they're on the Gulf of Aden. So that gives them a much bigger sort of window in terms of vessels passing or vessels heading into the Bab al-Mandab. Just as Iran is attacking vessels now that are well off outside the Hormuz, that are off Fujairah or off the Omani coast in the Gulf area, they are being attacked by Iran. So it increases the extent, if you like, of attacks. Inside Saudi Arabia, the infrastructure is being severely attacked on a daily basis. It seems there's not any intercept capability. All the interceptors have been concentrated on Riyadh, on the palaces that bin Salman uses.

So there is not much intercept capability. Riyadh International Airport has been shut for a long time, is going to stay shut for a further time, I believe. Other airports have been affected, and just in the sort of latest news, we hear that the Aramco headquarters has been struck and severely damaged, very severely damaged, according to reports. So all of this is building up. It's getting more and more, if you like, widespread. And we wait to see what Mr. Trump will do. However, having said that, I don't think that that is necessarily how Iran sees it, and probably not how Ansar Allah sees it. Because I think Iran is ready to escalate. It's not simply going to wait and wait for Trump and for the Americans to sort of get all their ducks in line for an attack on Iran. They will either preempt it or they will attack first, I believe.

#Danny

Well, Alistair, what's the significance, and what does it mean when Iran says that it would consider ground incursions in neighboring countries? I mean, I've heard this before, but it seems that now we're at a stage where Iran is considering where, on the escalation ladder, what kind of cards it has not yet played that will further move Iran toward its goals. Because, as you said, Iran's not going to wait around. And they're obviously not looking at this war as a war that they want to continue forever and ever and ever onward like it is now. So what is the significance when Iran says this in particular: ground incursions in neighboring countries?

#Alistair Crooke

Well, I think you have to see it in the whole. I mean, there's been a big escalation in Hormuz in that Iran, I mean, I think, attacked six vessels yesterday or the day before in one day. Some of them are on fire, badly on fire. Some of them seem to have struck mines. I'm not sure exactly where. But these are big vessels. One of them is a container ship from the UAE. And what is different this time is that Iran is aiming for the engine room. Before, they fired drones that did a certain amount of damage, but it was quite often superficial, and it was intended to be a warning message: turn around or else. Now they are attacking the engine rooms.

And this changes things dramatically, in a very great way because, you know, when the engine room is taken out like that, I mean, those vessels are not going to be repaired anywhere near that site. They'll probably have to go to Malaysia or India or somewhere and go into a dockyard for repairs, taking them out of commission for many months, probably. So, I mean, this has a big effect and has had a big effect on now the shipping costs. I mean, even if you take it away from Hormuz separately, I saw statistics that at the moment, to hire a big tanker, one of these very large tankers, for a voyage from America to China is now costing about \$80 million. I mean, huge amounts. I mean, it's actually costing more than launching one of Elon Musk's rockets into space, which is slightly cheaper.

And probably about the price you could have bought a vessel like that for before. I mean, this is rather ignored in the calculus by a lot of the commentators. Shipping is becoming really problematic. The losses are high. The owners don't want to risk them. It's hard to get shipping, and it's becoming hugely expensive. And so those, if you like, trading firms that do trade and have commissioned vessels are passing on, of course, the costs of this to, for example, the container owners. And the contents of those containers are going to cost very much more by the time they reach a shop, because this is what's happening. I think Maersk has already put a special levy on containers now. Nothing to do with the oil. This is to do with the fact that shipping has become so expensive.

So we have all of that taking place. And it's increasing inflation, and inflation increases. The figures have just come out of the United States, and it's heading towards 4%. And we will see the bond market reacting, I imagine, to that later today or tomorrow. So all of this is creating a bigger crisis. And the other crisis is really there is no diesel. I mean, it's not just that there have been vessels stopped and there's been a squeeze on Hormuz, on Middle East middle distillates, which is what you need for diesel or kerosene. But it is also because much of that is either in the wrong place, or refineries that need a particular type of distillate cannot get it, or there is no shipping to bring it to the place.

So there really is, I mean, the amount of diesel sort of in inventory is really low, if nonexistent. I mean, and I think, you know, a diesel crisis has been called for Europe. What that will mean, we will have to see. But in Europe, everything moves by diesel. I mean, in terms of, you know, delivery of goods to shops, of foodstuffs and things like that, are all moved by diesel vehicles. So, I mean, it's getting worse in terms of the economy, but the tensions are growing. I mean, what's happening in

Saudi Arabia is very serious. I mean, the infrastructure of Saudi Arabia has been destroyed. I mean, its biggest field has been attacked, one of the eastern fields, part of the large field that supplies 30%, perhaps, or used to supply 30% of Saudi.

That has been attacked. So all of these things come together because that infrastructure is not going to be replaced cheaply or quickly. I mean, there are bits of it you can replace quickly, for sure, but some of it is not things that you can buy off the shelf. I mean, in the complex structures of refineries and so on, you can't just order one and it will come by courier the next day. It's not like that. They have to be made to order, and they have to be custom-made. So those will take perhaps a couple of years to supply, maybe longer. And the cost of all this is going to be very high. So, for Gulf states and for countries like Saudi Arabia, the cost of replacing this is going to be, if they have the money, going to be very high indeed.

#Danny

Hmm. Yeah, well, yeah, I woke up to the reports about U.S. inflation, and that certainly does not comport with the aims of the Trump administration at this time, for sure. You know, it's a massive number. I think it's the highest in the last half year, so that is not what they want to see, for sure. But, Alistair, where does the Saudi situation fit in all of this more broadly? Because the United States has been hesitant to directly help Saudi Arabia more, whatever they could do more than what they already supply to Saudi Arabia. Israel has been reportedly wanting to enter this war, but with permission from Saudi Arabia, which is strange, I thought, though, Alistair, because Israel has struck Yemen in the past and did not ask for permission from Saudi Arabia to do this. So it's a really interesting situation that might be hard for someone to understand. Where does it all fit, the Saudi situation, with the broader, especially U.S.-Israeli position in the region? What's your thoughts on that?

#Alastair Crooke

I think the first thought would be that, of course, the United States is concerned about what is happening in Saudi Arabia because it has been a major supplier of oil. But at the same time, I think that they are quite hesitant about getting involved in Saudi Arabia, particularly against Ansar Allah or the Houthis, because, you know, they have experience of that. They recall from their past engagements that they're dealing with a tough situation: ideologically solid, tribal structure, which enjoys massive support from its own people. And it's going to be very difficult to see what exactly America can do. Ansar Allah is using its main weapon very effectively, which is the geography of the area.

The geography of the area is, it's like a sort of basin in the middle of the desert. And, you know, it doesn't matter who's in there. They're not controlled really by anyone. But then the mountains on the side of the Red Sea, and the key mountain areas, are where Ansar Allah has its strength and which they have seized and controlled. So, if you like, they're on the rim of the bowl. And sitting

there in the mountainside, the desert in the middle, you can put a row of tanks into it, and then you control it. But the moment you take them out, you don't control it any longer. It's not like, you know, gaining a real military asset.

So they have the commanding heights, particularly in the north, where they are entering into the town, and indeed also further south, although it's flatter further south near the Gulf of Aden, but they control that. They're starting to move into the three provinces, which are the southern, if you like, areas of Saudi Arabia, but which Saudi Arabia took from Yemen in 1934, expropriated it. But they are very closely linked directly to Houthis. I mean, there are tribal links to the Houthis. And so already the Houthis are at work in there. And I don't know exactly how it's working out on the ground. But as far as I understand it, they are making further progress there.

So where is this going? Well, I mean, of course, the Houthis' aims are to end the blockade, end the siege, end the airport siege. And Saudi Arabia, I believe, has offered them some sort of temporary ceasefire. But they say no. I mean, the Houthis say, no, we want an end to this conflict completely. All of it has to be settled. It's very similar to, if you like, what's been happening with Iran. They say, no, we're not doing a temporary fix. We've got to sort this out properly. And of course, this is too much, I think, humiliation for MBS to contemplate. So it's probably not going to happen. So therefore, we will see—I mean, we are seeing escalation even this evening.

I mean, it barely reaches the Western press very much. It does, but not much about it at all. But the escalation is taking place. Now, the only thing that might happen is that—and I think, so I think I was just starting to say—that I think Trump will be not enthusiastic to go in because, first of all, he knows who the Houthis are and that they're a formidable force. Secondly, I think he understands that this cannot be solved by air power alone. I mean, they've tried that and it doesn't work. All it does is usually end up by killing a lot of children and civilians in the process, but doesn't change in any way the strategic situation.

I think, thirdly, any reason for going in, if they did decide to go or get involved directly, that would further increase the price of oil, and that would mean further increases in inflation. And the third element, I think, which is—I mean, what would they do? I mean, everyone keeps saying, you know, but doesn't follow it up with any clear indications of what they think or mean. They say, yes, well, you know, America, we must go in and support Mohammed bin Salman. But how? How? I mean, what would they do? You know, it's not easy to drive tough hillside tribesmen out of their mountains. I mean, you know, you do this with infantry. You don't really do it with air power.

And you need a lot of boots on the ground, American boots, who would be at a great disadvantage against, you know, the Houthis in the mountain areas, clearly. So I think for all those reasons, Trump is hesitant because it would also mean widening the war, which won't be good for the midterm elections. Now there's the Iran war, there'll be a new front, the war in Saudi Arabia. None of that will be a good look for the midterm elections. So I think he's hesitant. That doesn't mean he won't do something. I don't know what, because the alternative for him is that he could see MBS

sinking and losing control over the situation in Saudi Arabia, and that wouldn't be good for him either. So he's between a rock and a hard place on Saudi Arabia.

Whichever he chooses is likely not to be good for him in the election period. The calculus for Netanyahu is slightly different. Netanyahu absolutely would like America to come in, and he said this explicitly in the last day. Netanyahu has said, you know, our objective is the complete destruction of Iran. They need to be destroyed completely. It's either them or us, and we have to prevail in this war. But we have to have this war to the end, when one side or the other is destroyed. Now, that again is not exactly an appealing message to his own electorate, but so what he's doing is to sort of try and sort of push Trump along, is to suggest that Israel might join in with Riyadh against Ansar Allah.

But again, it's the same question. You know, they say, "Oh, well, we're going to send intelligence officers and some refueling planes." What is the use of intelligence officers? We all know where those are. They're in the mountains surrounding the country. They are in the borders of Saudi Arabia. They are moving up the eastern borders because they have support from the Ismailis and the Zaidis on that side of the country too. So everyone knows where they are, but what are you going to do about it? And the Israelis, I mean, privately do admit that they know nothing about the command of Ansar Allah, that they know virtually nothing.

You remember they took out the whole cabinet at one point. The Americans bombed it, and while the cabinet was sitting, the entire cabinet was killed just like that. It was a decapitation strike, and yet the Houthis just continue on. So I don't see really what Israel can do. They do have Israeli intelligence officers operating in Riyadh with CENTCOM, with the American CENTCOM forces there. So they're sitting there. It's apparently shocked some of the people who've been to Riyadh to find that the Israelis were sitting in on all the intelligence meetings taking place. But they are there. But what they're going to do is a different question.

#Danny

Yeah, that's for sure. You know, Alistair, there have been reports now, too, of—I don't know if you saw this—that a container vessel carrying more than 2,500 containers struck a naval mine. And open-source intelligence says that you can actually see these containers sinking to the bottom of the Strait of Hormuz through imagery footage. Now, this is one of the larger container vessels. This keeps happening, though.

Either Iran is hitting these vessels, or there are mines reportedly still in the Strait of Hormuz along this route that Iran said they were going to close, which is the southern corridor, quote-unquote, as it has been called, along the Omani coast. What do you make of this? And when it comes to the U.S. and Israel in particular, how sustainable is this to keep going on in this way? Oil out of the Strait of

Hormuz and oil out of the region has dropped significantly, even in just the last two weeks, since Iran said that they were going to show, essentially, the United States that they did not, in fact, control the Strait. Your thoughts on this?

#Alastair Crooke

Well, I do think, looking at the photographs, that that big container vessel hit a mine. You can see the explosion taking place sort of under the stern and coming up and out. So it wasn't something from a missile coming onto it. It was a mine underneath it. And the Iranians have said quite clearly that they have mined the non-authorized channels. And there has been this great argument taking place on the internet between those who've been proclaiming that, you know, no, no, it's actually the Americans have succeeded in bringing out, you know, millions of barrels of oil a day, and others who say, well, actually, I mean, look at these images.

I mean, we have images that show, you know, as I say, yesterday, just one day, six tankers were struck. Some of them are on fire. Three of them, I think, have turned back. I mean, you know, it's not, you know, this hasn't been made up or invented. Whereas, you know, the stories of millions of barrels of oil coming through, where's the evidence of that? What do they say to prove it? Because most of these tankers have their transponders turned off so that you can't identify them. Well, they say, oh, this comes from satellite images. Well, whose satellite images? Because actually, it's very hard to get what are usually classified satellite images of this area.

During conflict, governments and companies don't provide these sort of images for obvious reasons. So I don't know where it comes from, and I think a lot of this has been played by the U.S. Treasury and the Commerce Department to try and manipulate the oil price. We all know now that the oil price is regularly manipulated by posts on Truth Social and then announcements that the Iranians are about to capitulate and are desperate for a solution. All of this is nonsense and noise and is best ignored. The reality is that there are no real negotiations.

It's true that the Americans did suggest that they could accept some of the preconditions, of the seven preconditions that Iran laid down. But from what I heard, the Iranian response has been, "This is completely unacceptable, and we don't agree to it." So there's nothing moving in terms of the negotiations from the Iranian point of view. Either you accept the seven conditions in total, or there's no negotiation. And so, at the moment, we're with no negotiations. And the aim, I think, of the talk about invading the neighboring or other Gulf states is really all about the same strategy: putting pressure on Trump in the lead-up to these elections, not just putting pressure on him, but actually threatening his position in the polls, that it may turn out very badly for him, and to put him in the situation of being in an extreme dilemma, that if he does something more about Iran, it may worsen still further his position in the polls.

So Iran is tightening the screws on Trump, basically, and they're tightening the screws on Trump on the passage of oil, because all of those stories were largely untrue. Yes, there were vessels that

went through, but many of them were actually—some of them were paid for. In other words, Gulf states even had bought the right to export one of their vessels through the authorized Iranian passageway. And those have been counted as saying, you know, how clever people have been, you know, skipping through the straits. It wasn't at all. They just paid for it. And other ones have been going to Asia, and they are paid for by China or whatever. So, I mean, that's what's been happening.

Some of these ships have been passing through the Straits. Most of them have been passing through because they've been permitted by Iran. They loosened it a little bit during the time that the Chinese were meeting with Trump in the United States, when Xi was there, in order not to have the wrong backdrop, shall we say. But now they've tightened it up. And as we can see, the results: burning vessels, and the cost of vessels is just astronomical, as they say, just to rent one, even if it's not going to Hormuz, if it's going from the U.S. to China. I mean, the cost of that is fantastic. And all of that's going to be reflected to us in what we buy in the shops.

#Danny

Alistair, there's this report in The Wall Street Journal. Dropsite News commented on it. They said this. They said that Ansar Allah is trying to build its own version of Iran's Khyber Shekan ballistic missile using Chinese-made parts, according to The Wall Street Journal. You know, in this article—because it's behind a paywall, I didn't pull it up—they say that Iran provided a lot of support in the years that led to Ansar Allah building up its strength. And now China is assisting them with the parts they need to even advance this ballistic missile arsenal further. How would you react to this? There's all kinds of debates. I think just the fact that we have these debates is a demonstration of how forceful and indeed powerful Ansar Allah has become. But what do you make of them? What do you make of these kinds of reports in particular?

#Alastair Crooke

You know, I think you treat them with huge caution, all of these reports, because really people do not know. And if there are people in the intelligence services who are leaking it, then they're leaking it for their own purposes. It's self-serving. It's not so that we're all better informed about the situation. So I think we should treat all of these with extreme caution. Having said that, I would say that it is true that Ansar Allah, their missiles have been showing much greater precision in this period. Now, people are attributing it to all sorts of things, whether it is new technical equipment or whether it is they're using cloud AI to make sure that their missiles can hit more accurately.

I mean, all sorts of rumors are going around. I think you should just ignore them. Look at what's happening on the ground. Look at the ground, and you can see that it is true. Something has happened to the Houthis. And I think you can see this in parallel to what I said at the outset of this call, when I said that Iran, for the last few days, four or five days, has been trialing new missile

systems in Iran to try and integrate them into their wider radar and missile system. Well, I don't know where they come from. I mean, the reports are that this is a new air defense mechanism that has been sent by China. It's got a name.

I don't know what it is. Forget it. But, you know, always in these cases, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Is it going to work? Has there been a step forward? Well, I think with Ansar Allah, there has been. Their success and the accuracy and their ability to avoid whatever air interceptors are used against them is demonstrable. So there is an improvement there. In Iran, I imagine we're going to see that. Iran is very careful not to put all its cards on the table at the same time. They treat them very, very carefully and allow them to be used only when the time is right and when a certain gain is going to result from the use of it.

So I don't think we're going to be shown everything that the Iranians have, all their capabilities at this point. But certainly we may, as this thing escalates. To a certain extent, I would say that, you know, the Iranians, what they're doing now is to taunt Trump, to literally taunt him and pressure him and embarrass him into doing something unwise, which will be ultimately to their benefit, they calculate. So we'll see. Are we going to see something major take place? That's always a possibility. You know, Trump has hinted at nuclear weapons at the General Assembly, and others have talked about that, tactical weapons or mainline weapons.

This is possible. But it's very difficult, actually, to see something, a target that would change the strategic balance of this war. You know, you can drop one on, you know, a city or something like that, but you kill just the inhabitants of the city. You don't necessarily change the whole strategic balance of the war. So I really don't know. And there will be people even within the Pentagon who will object to the use of nuclear weapons. That's clear. There is going to be some. So I don't know what weapons they can use to change the balance. But the main weapon that Iran and Ansar have is already apparent. It's in the inflation we're all feeling.

It's in the fact that there's likely to be rationing of diesel for people with diesel cars and things coming in Europe because the inventories have gone to zero, and no one has been prepared for it. The Europeans have not really prepared anyone, not warned them that this is coming. They've just blamed it, first of all, and Trump has blamed it on, first of all, the war in Ukraine, that it was Ukrainians that were damaging the refineries in Russia. Whereas that's really had only a marginal effect, if any, on the whole balance. Yes, Russia did produce a certain amount of diesel and has exported a certain amount of diesel, but it wouldn't have changed the inventory situation. I mean, we, as the West as a whole, use a huge amount of diesel every single day. That is not being replaced at the moment.

#Danny

You know, reports are, Alistair, that Pete Hegseth and CENTCOM, I guess that means Bradley Cooper, are the biggest proponents right now of renewing attacks on Iran. I'm wondering, you

know, as we come to the last 10 minutes or so here, your reaction to these comments by Trump. It's an interesting thing that he says comments like this at a campaign rally, given the current polling numbers about the war in Iran. But here's what he said in Alaska.

#Donald Trump

Long time ago, your country was dead. We never thought it had a chance. They never did. They disrespected us. They laughed at us. They don't laugh anymore. Now they said, "Sir, you're the hottest country in the world." Oh, wait till you see what we do to Iran. We're gonna do a number. They're just waiting. They're waiting. Wait till you see what we do to Iran. We sort of had it. We've had it. But, you know, it doesn't matter. The big thing is they were not going to have a nuclear weapon, and they won't. That's buried under thousands of tons of rock.

#Danny

So U.S. has had it, supposedly, and wait till you see what happens. But that's generally the mood in the United States, is not embracing of this kind of, not just rhetoric, but any potential action that might back it up now or in the future. So your reaction to this? It's an interesting approach by Trump. How do you see it?

#Alastair Crooke

There is something slightly worrying for me in this sort of duet that is being played, because you have Netanyahu in Israel, and recently he has been saying, "Oh, there's fresh intelligence that the Iranians are preparing a weapon, a nuclear weapon."

#Donald Trump

We have fresh intelligence.

#Alastair Crooke

Now, what is interesting about this is that, you know, if you look at the Hebrew press and the other things, you'll see that the military, the security experts, just absolutely react against this and say there is no evidence of that. Netanyahu is lying. But he keeps saying this. And then, as he says, yes, Iran is moving towards a weapon, Trump is saying, "And what's more, we will make sure they never have a weapon. Iran will never have a nuclear weapon. Iran will never have a nuclear weapon." And I'm slightly concerned about that, given what he said at the UN about, you know, that he may have this hard decision coming up whether to annihilate Iran.

Because, you know, anything goes today. You never know what people will choose to do or not do. I mean, we don't have boundaries. We don't have a legal structure. We don't have an ethical

structure. It seems that, however inhuman and however callous an action, it's all right today to do this. So I am slightly, you know, I just note this sort of duet being played out between the two of them. Does it mean anything? Well, you never know with Trump. How do we know what, you know, if anything happens? I do think that for Netanyahu it's more serious in a way. I mean, you know, Trump will either do better or worse in these elections. We'll find out soon enough.

But for Netanyahu, you know, if he loses the election, he may go to jail. But also for him, Iran is central. His whole life has focused on the need to destroy Iran. His book is largely preoccupied with arguing about how Iran is the target that Israel must destroy, that it's an existential element. So I think we should be careful just not to sort of say, well, you know, this is just bluster from Trump and Netanyahu. It may be. I certainly hope it is. But I don't think, you know, as I say, we're in this sort of completely anarchic geopolitical world now where, you know, there is nothing that people will not do if it will advance their interests.

So I think we have to be cautious about it. But on balance, I mean, it does come back to the same issue. So what would you do with a nuclear weapon? I think you could try dropping one on Pickaxe Mountain, and that would be probably the most plausible thing to drop it on. It's a huge granite mountain. It would probably bounce off it. It wouldn't destroy it. The platforms that Iran has within it are 1,000 meters under the surface. But, I mean, it would be possible, I suppose, to drop it and have a big performance and, you know, images and, you know, video footage, and Trump sitting in the Situation Room watching the television as Obama drops this bomb on Pickaxe Mountain.

But even if it has absolutely no effect, which it probably wouldn't, because, as I say, a granite mountain is very hard to bomb, even with a nuclear bomb. So even if it has no effect, this could be the way in which Trump can say, "You see, I've done it. They'll never get a nuclear weapon," even if that's completely beside the point, because we still don't know where 430 kilograms of enriched uranium are. They're hidden. Trump is still desperately trying to get to the point where he can negotiate the release of that into American custody. Iran is not going to hand over that leverage to Trump, I believe.

#Danny

My last question to you, Alistair, is: are things so cynical in the sense that do you believe that right now the United States and Israel, particularly, though, Israel, is waiting on the last-minute election results in Iran to then conduct some kind of strike or operation that could postpone them? Because, as you said earlier, the results are very close. Do you believe that this could be the calculation on why we've heard talks and buildup and threats all throughout this month, and yet that's what they've been so far?

#Alastair Crooke

I think I'm not the person really to answer that effectively because, first of all, we have to wait and see. But it is quite possible that he could lose both the House of Representatives and the Senate. By lose, I mean lose the majority. Now, with the Senate, that would be really important. Now, would that mean that, for example—which hasn't happened so far—he's just been able to ignore Congress altogether? Trump has done what he wants. He's pursued war against Iran. He's imposed tariffs. He's done pretty well whatever he wants. And there's been absolutely no blowback from Congress at all, no challenging him. Would a poor result in the midterms affect that, make it harder for him to pursue a war on the basis of it?

It's hard to say because, as I say, you have to get someone who understands the legal niceties. But I think the new Congress will not actually even take office, though, until late December. I don't know, maybe it's early December. But, I mean, there is a period of time where there will be no congressional opposition. So, yes, that is feasible. But to what extent, if there's been a shift in the Congress and in the Senate, will there be a real pushback? I don't know, and I slightly doubt it. I think he will just ride roughshod over Congress if he decides to do something against Iran. But I'm saying it will be something of a Pyrrhic victory, and I want to make that very clear.

It will be Pyrrhic for this reason. Iran, if it is attacked, even if it is attacked by a nuclear weapon, has a system for a second strike, a dead-hand system. All of their missile cities, which are spread across all the different provinces of Iran, have a structure and a set of instructions to the commanders of each one that if you've lost all of the command structure from Tehran, the communications have been severed, then the attack on Israel will continue. So, in other words, if the picture is envisaged that Trump will destroy, annihilate, as he put it, Iran, he is condemning Israel to annihilation by the same token too.

#Danny

Well, Alistair, it's been a great program. I want to make sure everybody knows that Conflicts Forum Substack, which you put together, is in the video description below. So everybody who watched today should go there after the show and click and support your work as you trace these developments. Further, everybody, hit the like button before you go. That helps boost the show and YouTube's algorithm. I'll be back tomorrow, 1 p.m. Eastern Time, October 15th, with Larry Johnson and Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. Thanks to the new member here, and thank you to everyone who moderated the chat today, and of course to everyone who viewed. Hit the like button before you go. Alistair, do you have any final words before I hit end stream here?

#Alastair Crooke

No, nothing more, I think.

#Danny

All right. Well, thank you so much, and thanks to everyone watching. I'll see you all tomorrow, October 15th. Bye-bye.