Episode 1,452: The War on Terror: Where Things Stand

Guest: Scott Horton

WOODS: This is the inaugural episode of Scott Horton Week. Couldn't be happier. And so on this initial episode, Scott, what is on deck?

HORTON: [begin George Carlin clip] "And to kind of wind up the news tonight, we'll take a look at the news hostility scoreboard." [end George Carlin clip] There you go. Everybody's old friend George Carlin had the news hostility scoreboard. I thought we could just start with kind of an overview of where we are on all the different terror wars today, Tom.

WOODS: Right, so in subsequent episodes, we're going to get into the weeds and go back in time and see how we got to where we are from a more long-term perspective. Right now, it's just more of an update of what's the current situation in these different places. I bet if you were to ask people what's going on in countries X, Y, and Z right at this moment, most people would have absolutely no idea like what's going on in Libya right now. I bet most people have no idea. So we're going to try to go through maybe half a dozen of these, but we're going to go through them in a style that is very un-Scott-Horton-like, because I know Scott knows so much about these things. We are going to go into greater detail as the week goes on, but this is our overview episode of where things are at the current moment. So in the interest of chronology, we may as well begin where the war on terror began, namely Afghanistan. What is the present situation there? Is there anything favorable that could come out of it?

HORTON: Yeah, you know what, I'm happy to start there, because that's the one with the best news, Tom. The reality, almost unbelievably to me, is that the President has clearly given a mandate to Zalmay Khalilzad, a very important neoconservative, very close to Paul Wolfowitz and all those guys going back for a long time — he has given him the mandate to see this through. And they have been in the midst of serious talks with the Taliban in Qatar for about a year and a half now, I guess. And the whole thing would have fallen apart a long time ago if Trump had not told him — and he's not working for the Secretary of State, either. He's working directly for the President. And they have whittled the conditions down. It seems like there's already an agreement. They're just sort of kicking the can around a little bit, but they seem to already have the agreement that the deal is America is going to have to pull up all military forces. And in exchange, the Taliban will promise to keep any international terrorist groups like al-Qaeda or ISIS out.

And in my book, Tom, I said don't even bother negotiating, because I just couldn't imagine the Americans being willing to shake hands with the Taliban on such limited terms, essentially admitting defeat. And so I said just go, and save face that way, just hope everybody ignores it, that kind of thing. But maybe I was too cynical. It looks like Donald Trump really wants this

to happen. The Taliban, their condition all along has been: remove troops, and then we'll talk to you. This time, they accepted: we'll talk to you on the condition that you promise we're working really going to seriously negotiate about the removal of troops. And so they have backed down that far, but clearly no further. And I'm really hopeful that this war that clearly cannot be one may soon be over.

Of course, the problem is that the government in the north, essentially the north of the country, is bound to fall. And I don't know if the Taliban will try to take over the entire north of the country without American, Saudi, and Pakistani support, like in the Bill Clinton years. That may be biting off more than they can chew, and they may be — I think all sides may be so tired of war now that maybe they will really quit fighting if America leaves. Maybe they won't. But it's clear that there's a massive correction coming for those whose power has been artificially built up by American paper dollars and troops in Kabul there, Tom.

WOODS: Give me a quick — now I'm limiting my follow-up questions just in the interest of getting to as many of these as possible. But at least give us a quick word about Pakistan's role in all this. Obviously, we've read many articles over the years about the drone war that took place there. And the response that you get from neocons is: yeah, it's tragic that so many of those drones went awry and there were so many civilian casualties, but the fact is, we did wind up getting virtually all the bad guys, no thanks to you bleeding heart libertarians.

HORTON: Well, you know, I think we'd have to concede some truth to that on the facts that some of the last friends of bin Laden were killed in drone strikes by the CIA in the early Obama years. And I don't know the total number of them. It may be in the tens or possibly even more than 100. I very much doubt more than that. Otherwise, we're talking any Arab in northwestern Pakistan or something, and that's not the same thing as a real member of al-Qaeda.

But at the cost that the hawks ignore. Some estimates are that as many as 80,000 people died not in the drone strikes, which did kill thousands of innocent people, but because the cost of waging the CIA drone war inside Pakistan was a bribe to the Pakistani government that we would back their war against the Pakistani Taliban, a war that killed tens of thousands of people, including, of course, many, many innocents. And remember I mentioned that part of the deal with the Taliban is that they have to keep al-Qaeda and ISIS out. Well, who's Afghanistan ISIS? They're not real ISIS guys from Syria and Iraq and that whole group of bin Ladenites there. They're actually refugees from the Pakistani Taliban, who fled to Afghanistan for safe haven and ended up establishing their own sort of jihadist group to rival the Taliban, and including made up of defectors from the Taliban. Now, I think ultimately, the Taliban can handle them without interference from the Americans, probably better without interference from the Americans.

But that whole problem and that whole new excuse to stay forever — that, *Didn't you hear? ISIS is there now. We can't leave now*, a safe haven myth on steroids, it gets this extra boost because of the presence of a group calling themselves ISIS, when they're really nothing but Pakistani Taliban guys. And so, you know, a severe consequences for innocent civilians in Pakistan and for the future of the war in that part of Asia.

Oh, and I should say, though, I think Trump has only bombed them once, as far as I know, in two and a half years in power here. So I'm not sure if there's any more to the War on Terrorism going on in Pakistan now, but I don't think so.

WOODS: Right, okay, that was my understanding also. All right, so in western Iraq, what's the situation there?

HORTON: Okay, well, so the Islamic State, which had grown up to exist as the result of blowback from Obama's Syria policy in 2014, where they had conquered eastern Syria and western Iraq, has been destroyed by Iraq War III, which Obama launched in August of 2014 and Trump finished, really, in October of 2017. But then, now, the Islamic State is just ISIS again. It's a wannabe state. But it's just al-Qaeda in Iraq, is what it is, left over from Iraq War II, where al-Qaeda never existed before Iraq War II began, as everyone knows, right?

But there are still at least hundreds, maybe thousands of these guys in predominantly-Sunni western Iraq, and there are still thousands of Americans special operations forces — and including some infantry and CIA and I don't know who all is there — embedded essentially, with the Iraqi Shiite government, just as in Iraq War II, fighting this Sunni-based insurgency in western Iraq. What they're trying to call a mop-up exercise after the Islamic State, which I guess in relative terms it is. But we saw how this war went back before in Iraq War II, fighting the Sunni insurgency in western Iraq. Petraeus' only victory was in convincing Bush to admit defeat, and to bribing these guys into stop fighting us, instead of crushing them as he had vowed to do and failed to do for years before 2007.

And because of the Shiite chauvinist government that America and Iran worked together to install in power in Baghdad in Iraq War II, they don't care at all about the Sunnis. And that was what led to the rise the Islamic State in the first place, was, it's essentially a stateless territory there. And it ain't no Rothbardian, private-property anarchy, either, Tom. It's essentially Mad Max territory out there ,with different militias vying for power, and essentially outside of the protection of the Iraqi state, which has all the oil in the south and in the north under Shia control, and so what do they care? And so that's why the insurgency is going to last forever there. And George Bush gave the Shia all of Baghdad, and the Sunni kings in Arabia won't accept it, and they will continue to finance a Sunni insurgency in western Iraq against the Shia there, probably for the rest of our lifetimes. And American GIs will probably stuck in the middle of it the whole time, too.

WOODS: Well, from that depressing story, we move to a still more depressing one, namely what's going on in Yemen, although there's apparently been an interesting development involving the United Arab Emirates.

HORTON: Yeah. Well, they're turning tail and cutting and running. They had no right to kill any Yemenis at all in the first place —

WOODS: By the way, by the way, Scott, why should this be a big deal? The UAE is so small, it's like Rhode Island. Why would it matter what their position on this is?

HORTON: Well, they're rich, and so they can afford a lot of mercs, including a lot of Sudanese child soldiers and God knows what sort of mercenaries from Colombia and Nigeria and all over the place, fighting there. And plus, they have some small military themselves. As far as I understand, a more effective ground force than the Saudis have. But essentially, they've decided — and I think part of this was because of all the recent tension with Iran, that they decided that they would rather not be involved in a war with Iran if the Saudis and the Americans picked one. And that a good way to get out of the line of fire might be to go ahead and start making overtures toward them and to stop bombing their friends in Yemen. It's not

true that the Houthis are like Hezbollah, more or less a 51st state of Iran or anything like that at all. But they certainly are friends and more allies now than when this war started in the name of that relationship back four years ago. And so this is essentially like a peace offering from the UAE to Iran.

And we hope that it will be absolutely crippling to the US/Saudi war effort against the Houthis there, because the Saudis' force on the ground is much more limited. And so the UAE does say that they're going to continue to support these and those militias, but I think without their actual ground force there to run it all, they're essentially left with a bunch of al-Qaeda kooks running around. And so they can run around and shoot rifles, but they can't really take territory. They're probably no match for the Houthis, if the Americans would get out of the Houthis' way.

But civilian casualties, I urge everyone to read Daniel Larison at *The American Conservative* magazine. He has been so good on Yemen for the last four and a half years, five years now. And he pointed out this UN study where the civilian casualties now, or maybe it's the overall casualties, are 233,000. I'm sure they're much higher than that. But according to these counts, and Ekladata, as well, say between 85 and 100,000, have been killed in outright violence in the war, with another 150,000 or so, 130-150,000 or so deprived to death, essentially, from the war. And I'd be surprised if the numbers are that low, Tom. If we had peace today and someone did a brand-new count of the civilian casualties there, I think we'd find that the excess death rate when you extrapolate all that out, it'll be many hundreds of thousands more have died of deprivation in this war.

It's one of the poorest countries in the Middle East, and we've had them under full blockade this whole time, and deliberately have been targeting the — and when I say "we," I mean the US government in alliance with the Saudis and the UAE, etc. — have been explicitly and deliberately targeting basic food supplies, the water works, the electricity, the sewage, doing everything they can, the marketplaces, the irrigation, the flocks in the field, and whatever they can to disrupt life, the basic necessity level for the civilian population there. It's a genocide. There's nothing else to call it. Do it this way. If Iran was deliberately starving a civilian population of, say, Yemen to death, don't you think the Americans would call it a genocide? A deliberately inflicted famine? Of course.

WOODS: All right, the US government conniving at the situation in Yemen, this goes back to the Obama administration. So does Libya. Now, I've heard with Libya, I've heard some neocons say: all right, we'll admit that maybe it didn't go quite as planned, but you're exaggerating the situation today. Things really have stabilized over there, and maybe we're going to be ultimately vindicated. What do you say about that?

HORTON: [laughing] That's hilarious. Yeah, I once read Max Boot say that, you know, it's really true that — and this was Obama's position. Obama said his worst mistake was the war in Libya, but — wait, let him finish this sentence now — we should have stayed. We should have deployed ground troops. We should have built a nation. And the lesson there was you don't invade a country and then not build it. The lesson was not you don't invade a country that never attacked you, that never did anything, lie us into war, claiming completely unrealistically — I mean, the whole thing was a joke at the time.

If anyone remembers, it was laughable when Obama announced that Qaddafi is going to kill every man, woman, and child in Benghazi if we don't stop him. Oh, really? That's funny,

because he could have done that his whole life long. But now all of a sudden, he's going to kill every man, woman, and child in Benghazi, not that he's massacred civilians in any of the towns between Libya and Benghazi on his way to Benghazi. But anyway. I mean, at least Bill Clinton claimed that there were already 100,000 dead Albanians in Kosovo. George Bush claimed that there were warehouses full of sarin. Obama claim that completely unrealistic was going to happen, and that was the basis of this war.

And right now, it's a civil war with at least three major sides. And the former CIA asset seems, Tom, like he might again be a CIA asset. I think Donald Trump has taken a liking to him. But that's General Haftar. And this one is the one on the worst on. I haven't really developed this chapter of my book very well yet or anything. I'm trying very hard to keep track of the sides. But I believe that the UAE and Egypt and Saudi back Haftar, and that's why the — or maybe — yeah, but Qatar backs the other guys. Anyway, but that's why Trump is now starting to like Haftar again, is because the Saudis like him, whereas I think the Obama government had parachuted him in there and then found him to be unreliable. And he was going to be like the next secular Qaddafi-type guy. He had been living in Virginia for 30 years, and they parachuted him in there.

And essentially, it's funny, because if you look at the war in 2011, the sides are switched. You have the Islamists ruling in Tripoli, and you have the secular Qaddafi-type ruling in Benghazi and marching west and trying to take Tripoli. And essentially, he doesn't have the power to do it. He has an army, but he doesn't have the power to take the capital city ,so there are constant skirmishes along the outskirts. There's been, I guess for the last maybe six weeks or so, there's been this latest offensive by Haftar, who's threatened to invade Tripoli for a few years now. And *The New York Times* had it that, well, we don't like Haftar anymore, because now the Russians like him, and the Russians are backing him, and so that means that we don't like him anymore, and this kind of thing. I really don't know the truth of it.

But I do know that the US — essentially, the government in Tripoli and the government in Benghazi were both so ineffectual, the US and the UN came and tried to make the Government of National Alliance or something very close to that, and tried to claim the legitimacy. And I think the Tripoli government went along with that eventually, and has tried to join up with that. But this is the government that we're also now backing Haftar in fighting and trying to defeat. So that's not perfect, but that's a close-enough description to the absolute cluster what-you-call-it over there.

WOODS: Wow, okay. Now as I say, I'm limiting follow-up questions just in the interest of the sheer amount of material we want to try to hit on. How about Syria, which just seems so complicated to people? I mean, it's almost — I wouldn't say — it's not quite like this. But I remember the Balkans in the mid '90s, and I remember thinking, *I am never going to know what the heck is going on over there. I'm too busy with grad school. Someday I will figure out what is going on.* And so likewise, I think a lot of people feel that way with Syria. Like they know there are a lot of bad guys, and there's bad guys on every side. They're not sure what to do. But you're not supposed to like Assad, but then none of the other people are any good either. And I think that's about the level of knowledge most people have.

HORTON: Yeah.

WOODS: We'll get into Syria in more detail perhaps later in the week, but for now, what exactly is the situation at this particular moment as we are speaking in July 2019?

HORTON: Okay, well, first of all, the American role has been reduced, essentially, to a few thousand troops at the Al-Tanf base, which is near the border of Jordan and Iraq in southeast Syria, and a few thousand more are embedded with the Syrian Kurds in the northeast of the country there. So in the east of the country — in the north, embedded with the Kurds; in the south at this Al-Tanf base and not really fighting anyone at this point. The purpose supposedly of staying at al-Tanf — and this is, by the way, the reversal of Trump's declared policy that we're getting out of Syria. The generals countermanded it, convinced him to forget it, and he forgot it. He's leaving the troops there. Should have known better than to believe it for a moment, Horton's law and all of that. But anyway, it's not just campaign promises. It's any day of the week — which, by the way, did you know Horton's laws now in the Urban Dictionary?

WOODS: No, that's awesome. By the way, not everybody may know Horton's law. I think, if I may try to state it the best I can, it's that, as a rule, politicians will keep their bad promises and neglect the good ones.

HORTON: That's exactly it.

WOODS: Okay, all right.

HORTON: So now the purpose of being at the Al-Tanf base in southeast Syria is to keep the Iranians out, which is not really effective or anything. There's a highway that runs near there. I guess the idea is they're going to attack any Iranian trucks that are driving across Shiite-controlled Iraq, or into Syria, or what? I don't know. They're establishing a presence.

And in the north, they're essentially like troops in South Korea serving as a tripwire to ward against our NATO ally, Turkey. Or maybe a better way to put it is: deterring Turkey from attacking the Kurds. That's what the Americans would call it, you know, the American government. I'm more of a Ron Paulian on that kind of thing, that we could end up in a war with our allies over a group that the Americans have used, that's for sure. As I said, Barack Obama's Syria policy of backing the jihadists starting in 2011 blew up into the Islamic State. So then he had to go back to backing the Shia in Iraq, but on the Syrian side of the border, embedded with the YPG, the Syrian Kurdish faction of the Turkish PKK, which is a former-Marxist, now-Bookchinist, anarchist, leftist group of Kurds. And they have in the past especially committed terrorist attacks inside Turkey and are regarded as terrorists by the Turkish government and by the United States.

And so, as a result of Iraq War II, which includes eastern Syria, Syrian Kurdish factions have gained in power and influence, and that has greatly angered our ally in Turkey. And so Erdogan is constantly threatening to invade and crush Syrian Kurdistan, and the Americans are standing between them. However, we don't need to be, because all we have to do is leave and the Syrian Kurds — and they've already been talking with Assad about this all along — have every incentive to allow the Syrian Arab Army back into their territory to reestablish their state monopoly on force there to prevent the Turks from "needing" to do anything. And you would have the Syrian Arab Army, the state army of the government in Damascus, would fill in that gap and would guarantee security of Turkey from the YPG — which is hardly necessary in real life, but in in terms of the perceptions from the Turks, it's very important.

But so that's already a done deal. The Kurds, in the whole Syrian war, they never fought against Assad. They took advantage of their autonomy while they had it, but they never made an enemy out of him. And they've been ready to work those things out all along.

Now, the most important part of what's still going on in Syria, even though Assad has won the war in all of the rest of the country, is that in the Idlib province, you still have another caliphate, really another little Islamic state, a bin Ladenite state, made up of Barack Obama's mythical moderates. Barack Obama and John Brennan's moderates, otherwise known as al-Qaeda in Syria, or Hay'at Tarir al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra, formerly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq, in Syria. That's who they are: the bad guys, the worst part of the Sunni-based insurgency from Iraq War II, hole out in northwestern Syria there and protected by the Turks, still, from being finished off by the Syrian Arab Army, which started an assault against them a few weeks ago. And then one Turkish-backed force in Idlib fought them off, and America is essentially out of that contest at this point. Trump called off CIA support for these al-Qaeda terrorists back in 2017, this time in 2017, two years ago.

And so Putin is really the one who's got a friendship with Erdogan and with Assad, and I guess it's up to him to decide how long this islamist state continues to exist there or what's to happen to these fighters. Can any of them be repatriated or somehow just made to surrender and be arrested and prosecuted through civil systems or what? I don't know. I'll tell you what, though: I read a report last week said that, you know where the al Qaeda guys in Syria going? The ones hemmed in in Idlib with nowhere to go and they're afraid that they're going to get bombed? They're going to Libya. Giant, stateless, terrorist wonderland, the next one. Their safe haven when they're on the run from Syria. And so I don't know if that's really true or not, or just to find more contest in Syria and Libya.

Oh, I should have mentioned that there was just a report recently that we've been waging a drone war the entire Trump years' long, two and a half years of very top-secret drone war in Libya against, really, Obama's al-Qaeda fighters, the guys that Obama and Hillary Clinton sided with to overthrow Qaddafi back in 2011. Trump's been hunting them down, and of course, killing innocent civilians along with that, too.

WOODS: Oh, what a train wreck.

HORTON: So those who remember, Syria was Hillary Clinton's bank shot. That's what *The New York Times* said. She goes, "Oh, this will be our bank shot." We'll take the jihadists and the weapons from Libya and send them on to Syria. That was in 2011. That's how we got the mess we are talking about now.

WOODS: Oh, good grief. All right, which one do you think we should talk next?

HORTON: Okay, well, let's talk about Iran, I guess. Everyone just type in "Nick Turse" and "Africa" and read all about SOCOM, the Special Operations Command, and their embedding throughout Africa and fighting drone wars and special operations wars for Mali, which is a direct result of the Libya war, and into Niger, Chad, Sierra Leone. It's all there, man, going on all the time.

But the big thing we should end with, I guess, is Iran. So the big deal about Iran is this: we can't attack Iran. It's just too big. It's four times the size of Iraq with three times the

population. And it's got severe mountain ranges, and all of these things. And the Army and the Marine Corps don't want to invade it. They're not even considering invading it. And I think probably the ground-troop types have a lot of cynical views of Air Force promises and Navy promises that they can take care of it. I mean, cruise missiles I guess are good for taking out some anti-aircraft, but if you really want air dominance, you need special operators on the ground with laser designators for these laser-guided bombs, and that is just biting off so much more than I think Special Operations Command or the Army or Marine Corps want to chew. And essentially it's just off the table.

And so this should really be sort of the prologue to my new book is, you know, essentially, it's all about Iran. American policy can always be understood through the lens of their frustration that they lost control of Persia in '79, and they can't get it back. And they can't attack it, they can't invade it, they can't really figure out a way to regime change it like '53 again. And they don't know what to do, and everything they try to do to hurt Iran only empowers them. See Iraq War II or Obama's war in Syria and then the resulting Iraq War III, both of which were fought by America for Iranian interests. Or look at how the war against the Houthis has actually essentially just given Iran credit for all the Houthis' victories that they had nothing to do with, and this kind of thing.

And so the Americans are throwing a temper tantrum, that they're the USA, global superpower, number one, with the yellow ribbon and all these things, but they cannot have their way in Persia. And so they make up all these pretended threats about, "Iran is the greatest state sponsor of terror." Notice they never explained what they're talking about, because, as Douglas McGregor explains on the Tucker Carlson show three times a week, *Iran kills ISIS, Tucker. Iran kills al-Qaeda, okay?* If you want to talk about terrorists that matter to us, Iran is the enemies of the same ones that were enemies of. You know, "greatest state sponsor of terrorism without any details." Sure.

And of course, the hoax of the threat of their nuclear program, which, as we've discussed before, the worst thing you can say about it and be honest, is that they developed a latent nuclear capability in order to try to just get the Americans to lift the sanctions against them, so they can have a regular economy and be a normal country in a normal time. That's the only leverage they've got, is build up a nuclear program so that they can negotiate it away. It worked for Qaddafi. He didn't even build one up. He just had a couple of warehouses full of old junk from Pakistan, from AQ Khan's garage sale, and traded it to Bush for a victory in the public relations machine. And that's all the Iranians are trying to ever do. They're not making nuclear bombs.

And if you listen to Donald Trump explain the problem with the Iran nuclear deal, sometimes he actually does get into specifics now, and he has no idea what he's talking about. And I have to give him credit that he does understand very well the lies that John Bolton has told him and he repeats them very well. But he's just completely wrong about the terms of the deal and why it's so bad, in order to justify his position. And it's essentially really dangerous, because by pulling out of the Iran deal and heightening up all these tensions in order to "get a better deal" through maximum pressure, he hasn't really done a good job at all of leaving the Ayatollah a way out. How's he supposed to get a better deal without the Ayatollah just blowing his brains out or hollering, "Unconditional surrender. I'll meet you on the USS *Missouri* to sign your papers," without a war having been fought.

Pompeo gave a speech Heritage, where he laid down 15 demands that they must follow through one for us to even talk to them again. Pat Buchanan said this sounds like the kind of thing a Roman proconsul would be reading to a defeated tribe in Gaul. Except we haven't defeated them. This is crazy to make these kind of demands. I think Trump probably believes it is maximum pressure to get a "better deal," but the hawks, I think Pompeo and Bolton — although I'm told they don't get along. Maybe Pompeo's more on Trump's side. I don't know. Seems to me like Pompeo and Bolton both are trying to sabotage any attempt at talks. As Pompeo warned explicitly the other day: *Talks lead to deals. Look what happened last time we had talks with them. We got the Iran deal. So we don't want tha*t. What's the opposite of that? maximum pressure with no out for Iran. Full sanctions, full blockade, a virtual Treasury Department blockade against anyone in the world who dares to try to trade with them. No waivers for Korea, Japan, or any of our allies to buy their oil or anything like this, strangling their economy the way they did Iraq's in the 1990s.

And so this is the kind of thing where, if they want a war, they could cause one. But if it does break out, don't let anybody blame Iranian aggression for it. America is picking this fight with them, and for no reason at all. They haven't done anything to us. People want to point to Iranian aggression, they talk about the bombing of the Beirut barracks in 1983. Or they talk about Iranian-backed militias in Iraq defending themselves when David Petraeus attacked them in 2007. Doesn't impress me. Wasn't a good-enough casus belli to bomb them for Ronald Reagan or for George W. Bush. But it's supposed to be a good enough excuse now? No way.

WOODS: Wow. All right. You know, thing is I remember being — I guess it was late 2007, it must have been, when that report came out from, I guess it was the Intelligence Committee — it's been so long —

HORTON: You're right.

WOODS: — saying, we don't believe Iran is pursuing a — do you remember the details of that just so I can tell my story?

HORTON: Yes, absolutely. It's the National Intelligence Council's national intelligence estimate of November 2007 that said that Iran has suspended even their research into nuclear weapons in 2003 after America got rid of Saddam for them.

WOODS: Right, so when that came out —

HORTON: And that they never had a decision to pursue an actual bomb.

WOODS: Right, now, when that came out, that was at a time when some of us were fearing that they were going to launch a war on Iran. I mean, even all the way back then we were worried about it. Like, I was worried about it enough, I remember I was sitting in a hotel room in Poland. I was doing some speeches over there. And the only thing I could do was watch the one English-language channel. And it reported that this had happened, and I remember for the first time going to sleep, thinking about foreign policy with a smile on my face, thinking, well, this will at least make it marginally more difficult for the bastards. And of course, they're going to carry on. It doesn't matter what you say; they're going to carry on anyway. But it did make it more difficult. We never got that war. But it just goes to show how long this has been hanging over our heads. I mean, if this Rand Paul thing, where it's been

proposed, we read in Politico, that he could be some kind of, I don't know, emissary to Iran or something, if that were to happen, then maybe we could just get over the threats of war once and for all, I would forgive everything. I've been much, much more pro-Rand in the past few years. I mean, I'll forgive everything. He can even hire Jesse Benton again, if he wants to, if he could just get this done.

HORTON: Well, yeah, I'm telling you, it's his best day. And I have confirmation that that story is true, that he brought that up to Trump. And I'm also told, Tom, that Trump said yes, and that this is going to happen.

WOODS: Well, let's hope. Let's hope.

HORTON: And listen, there's nothing really to fight about. If Rand can come up with, *Hey, guys just sign one more additional protocol to your safeguards agreement*, or something that Trump can save a little face and we'll just act like none of this ever happened — of course, we're talking about Donald Trump, so he can flip-flop all he wants. He could just say, *Yeah, the Ayatollah said I was great, so I decided he's not so bad, and now we're friends*. Who cares? And he could do whatever he wants. Like no politician in American history, this man can flip-flop and get away with it. So why not do it for the good? And seriously — and I think he knows this. He needs a win in Korea. I think he knows he needs a win in Afghanistan to be reelected. How about a win in Iran? How about, go to Tehran and shake hands with the Ayatollah and say, "You know what? All our problems are all Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and George Bush and Bill Clinton and George Bush and Barack Obama's fault. I don't care about that. Let's be friends and just forget all this ever happened." There's nothing to fight about with them.

WOODS: Yeah, well, it'd be nice if more people thought that way.

HORTON: And you know what? If Nixon can shake hands with Mao Zedong, Tom —

WOODS: For crying out loud.

HORTON: — then anyone can deal with anyone, okay? Kim or Assad or Khomeini or Maduro. Kill them with kindness. We have all the strength in the world to deal from a position where we have everything to give and nothing to lose.

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding.

HORTON: And Trump of all people ought to be able to grab that and run with it. And then he could be Trump the Great and sail into a supermajority reelection in 2020, if that's what he really wants.

WOODS: All right, let's wrap things up by reminding people about the project you're working on. Scott is basically killing himself working on what for us will be more or less the definitive work on the war on terror, just systematically going through it with that kind of Scott Horton analysis that you know from his book *Fool's Errand* and you know from *The Scott Horton Show* and his appearances on this program. And look, it's difficult and time consuming. Even when you're a guy like Scott, who's got so much in his brain, it's a hard project. And he's putting a lot of things aside to do it. And that means we should support him. I mean, Scott's got to eat

and his family's got to eat, and he's doing something for us. He's doing something extremely valuable and important that will be lasting and significant. So head over to TomWoods.com/Horton, and throw a couple of bucks at Scott to keep him afloat during this time when he's doing this intense work. And you will be amply rewarded, because this book is going to be fantastic. You know it as well as I do. So the link, again, is TomWoods.com/Horton. And then the rest of this week, remember, it's going to be all Scott Horton. Scott Horton every day. We're going to learn a ton of stuff, and it's going to be great. Scott, thanks for your time today and looking forward to tomorrow.

HORTON: Thank you, Tom.