



WOODS: All right, I went a week without talking about this, mainly because it happened, the situation in Iran exploded suddenly, and I was recording Jeff Deist Week for the show, and then I was going out of town. But in a way, even though my natural instinct would be get Scott Horton on immediately, maybe it's better in this case to have a little bit of time to let the whole thing sink in and get a sense of what the long-term consequences might be, so maybe it's not such a bad thing that we took a little time in getting you on.

But anyway, let's start off here with some background, because I have people who ordinarily agree with me on issues like this, agree with the two of us on issues like this and on war and on nonintervention, who themselves are saying, now in this case, this particular strike, you just have to support. Obviously, your embassy gets attacked, you have to respond. You cannot not respond to that. So he responds to it in a very measured way. There's a moderate Iranian response. Everybody saves face, and we can move on. There's no big war coming out of it, so this is hysteria on the part of the antiwar people, and it's unreasonable not to have this response. I got this from people who are friends of mine, who are very sympathetic to what I say. So I think in a case like this, it's very, very necessary to lay the groundwork to try to address the history-began-five-minutes-ago assumptions that underlie a lot of this.

So Scott, you are the best guy to do this. What is the gist of the historical background we need to look at this sensibly? And by the way, let me just say that from my dumb-guy point of view, when I look at Twitter and I see people saying, they refer to the US regime as "us" and "we" and "our" embassy and this and that – which by the way, the regime has already won half the battle when it has people saying "we" and "us" and "our." But I would read them saying, look, Iran keeps attacking us and it keeps attacking us. And the way I think of it is, the US regime keeps trying to be the regional hegemon in that part of the world, and the American booboisie response to Iran in this situation is: hey, quit attacking our troops in your neighboring country. There's something screwed up about that, it just seems to me, like we're not looking at this clearly because nationalism is blinding us to the reality of the situation. All right, that's long setup for you, Scott. What do you want to say to us?

HORTON: All right, well, I'll try to concede a point to the opposition here along the lines of what you just mentioned there about how a war did not break out. And a war was not very likely to break out, and so people who were very alarmist about this – I mean, hey, the left-wingers held an antiwar protest for the first time in 11 years because they thought that something was going on.

But if you actually know where the chess pieces are set up in the Middle East right now, you know that the Americans know that they cannot have a war with Iran, just as well as Iran knows that they cannot have a war with the United States. Mutually assured destruction is keeping the peace as far as that goes. This is small-level tit-for-tat stuff, which doesn't make it right, but it means that, well, the people that you're talking about, in comparison to a lot of hyperbole from the other side, get to feel smug and righteous about how, *See? There were so few consequences from the terrible thing I support, so that means I'm smarter*, and this kind of thing, when that's not really right. And these kinds of things can get out of hand despite the intentions of leadership on either side.

But as far as the history-began-five-minutes-ago thing, I don't know why it's so hard for people to just say, you know, I don't know about that. There are lots of things, Tom, that I don't really have opinions about, or if I have an opinion, it's just kind of an impression, but I would be first to admit to you that I don't know all about this or whichever situation. For example, the disputes over the elections and the way they were held in Venezuela over the last few years. There's a lot of kind of weird things in there for both sides to highlight and complain about. And how it all shakes out and whatever, I don't know, I guess if I spoke Spanish, I'd be a little bit better. But I don't mind telling you that, really, I don't know. I don't have to have a real opinion about exactly what happened in the election of 2015 over there.

But people, for whatever reason, are just determined to say, oh, yeah, no, I definitely line up on this side of this argument over this dispute with Iran and Iraq, that obviously 99% of these people know not the first thing about whatsoever. So instead, it's just vicarious violence is fun, like going to the movies on Friday and seeing a car chase and a shootout or something that, you know, wow. Neat. I saw a meme of Baby Yoda looking all cruel, and it says, "Americans when their government kills somebody," and it's Baby Yoda, and the caption is, "Yes, die, scum." And, yeah, that's about right. You know, *Wow, what fun*.

And you know what? I'm in a perfect position to accuse my fellow Americans of this, because I was really bad on Libya in 1986. I was in fourth grade and Ronald Reagan started carpet bombing Libya, and I thought it was awesome. And me and all my friends were drawing pictures of F-111s on the back of our homework. Same thing when I was 15 in Iraq War I, where the bigger the explosion, the better. I didn't care about the Iraqi people. I just liked fighter jets and horsepower and loud noises and explosions, because what can I say? I'm a red-blooded American heterosexual male, and I like explosions and guns and cool stuff.

And I didn't care about their humanity, but I was a 15-year-old sociopath, and the rest of us older than that are supposed to be better than that. You should want to know whether history really started five minutes ago or whether there's more to it than that. And the fact that the ayatollah wears a mean old black hat and your audience leans right, that shouldn't be all that we need to know about the situation, for God's sake. Right? I don't know. Sorry to just belabor that.

But seriously, the reality is America's the bad guy. Of course, this is all Jimmy Carter's fault and all Bill Clinton's fault and Barack Obama's. There, if you lean right, I skipped all your Republicans. But it's one policy from Jimmy Carter all the way through. And yeah, they switch sides back and forth, but usually within administrations rather than the administration switch which sides they're backing.

But the point is that it should be impossible for Americans watching TV to believe that, *The Iranians, they attacked our embassy for no reason. We had to defend ourselves from that*. First of all, the attack at the embassy wasn't an attack at all. It was no Benghazi at all. They were allowed by the cops in the furthest fence from the embassy, the visitors' gate, which is a mile and ten buildings from any kind of target. And there was no attempt by the rioters to kill anyone. The American State Department employees had already all been evacuated. There was nothing but Marines there anyway. And I'm not saying their lives are forfeit; I'm saying their lives were not in danger.

And the police, they were making a point. Well, wait a minute, why would the police be making a point? Ah, that's because America is attacking our allies in Iraq right now. The police on the side of the government that Americans installed in Baghdad, that's the same authority as these so-called Iranian-backed Shiite militias. This is the same side America has been fighting on since 2003. So that's why the police apparently believed it was in their interest to let this protest go on for a little while and get just a little bit out of control: to make a statement. Isn't that ironic and interesting enough to want to know more right there?

These were not Sunni, bin-Ladenite insurgents, suicide bombers. These were our friends from the paramilitary forces, the Popular Mobilization Forces. They're called the PMF groups or

PMU for Popular Mobilization Units. They're the paramilitaries who just helped Obama and then Trump fight Iraq War III against the Islamic State, that, as we've discussed on the show before, Obama built up in Syria in order to spite Iran because Bush had fought Iraq War II for them. And so that's how it goes. I'm telling it in reverse order.

But on this specific thing, by the way, the protest was in response to Donald Trump killing 25 members of a Shiite militia called Kata'ib Hezbollah, because he blamed them for a rocket attack on an American base on December 27th that killed an American contractor. But they've never even proved that that rocket attack was launched by Kata'ib Hezbollah, much less that Iran told them to do it. *The New York Times* is now saying that they have intercepts, but before — and that's the first we've even heard of supposed evidence existing, when in fact, *The New York Times* reported that day that, in fact, ISIS has threatened this space numerous times. What are American forces doing — we have 5,000 guys in Iraq. What are they doing? They are allied with the Shiite militias and the Iraqi Shiite army, fighting Iraq War Three and a Half — in other words, the mopping up exercise of what's left, fighting what's left of the Islamic State, or ISIS, or al-Qaeda in Iraq, in western Iraq and the Sunni areas of Iraq. And so it makes perfect sense to think that ISIS would have launched the attack rather than the Shiite militia. It's a bit counterintuitive that the Shiite militia would do it.

Now, it is possible, as *The New York Times* is saying and the government is saying, that the Iranians are trying to keep the pressure on the Americans so they don't get too comfortable. *Yes, we're glad you're here helping us fight the Islamic State, but don't think we're going to allow you to stay, and don't forget that it's up to us if you're going to stay or leave.* And that's why they were pressuring them with these kind of random rocket attacks. That's their story. It's within the realm of possibility. But I think it's just as likely, maybe more likely, that it's ISIS jerking our chain on this whole thing, and either unwittingly, coincidentally, or possibly even deliberately — like a false flag sarin attack in Syria — giving our government a crisis to exploit, to turn against the Shiites, to go back to the Islamic State's side in the civil war. And in effect, that's what they were doing.

But anyway, even if it's true that it was Shiite militia that did that, they killed one contractor. Trump killed 25 of their guys in response. Then they hold a protest where no one is hurt, and they barely get in the visitors' gate. And in response to that, Trump launches an act of war. He kills their top general. And imagine if the Iranians had assassinated General Mattis or General Petraeus. And imagine if Mattis or Petraeus had actually ever won a war rather than being a couple of scumbag, liar losers, but instead were held in the highest regard like Ike Eisenhower or Patton or MacArthur or something like that. That's who this guy Soleimani was to them, the head of their Quds Force. He was their probably second-most influential man in their government after the Supreme Leader Ayatollah himself, probably more powerful than the president.

And that's the kind of thing that could have gotten way out of hand. It was absolutely a huge escalation to do, and there's no justification for it. All the claims that, well, there was going to be an attack on our embassies and all this, it was obvious in the first place that they were just bluffing with that. And when people call them out on it, for days and days, Trump and Esper, the Secretary of Defense, have been all over the place, trying to make up a story about how, well, we got some intelligence that there was some threat or some kind of thing. It's clearly just spin, because otherwise, it's clearly illegal for them to do that the way they did it. They're trying to say it was force protection.

And then you can tell they're lying, too, because they spend all this time talking about 13 years ago. Don't you know that in the year 2007 in Iraq War II, America fought the Shia for a little while? In the spring and fall of '04 and then in 2007 for about six months, seven months, David Petraeus when he launched his surge, he sent Danny Sherston and the boys against Muqtada al-Sadr's forces in East Baghdad and in Najaf, and then by the magical property of these liars, claimed so, Tom. That means that any American in Iraq War II who was killed by a

Shiite was killed by Iran, and that Shiite Arab automatically magically just becomes an Iranian, and any bombs that they laid on the road and set off become magically, falsely, Iranian EFP bombs, when all of those bombs – and I've got ten pieces of journalism and firsthand sources out of American military intelligence.

I just talked with Matthew Hoh about this on my show the other day. He had the intelligence firsthand right in front of his face. These bombs were made in Iraq by Iraqis, just like I told you on the Antiwar.com blog in 2006 and '07. And Gareth Porter and Phil Giraldi and all our greats debunked all of this stuff way back then. And they come out now, and you'll see this on TV over and over and over again, *They killed 600 of our guys in Iraq. They killed 600 of our guys in Iraq.* And none of these people even have the slightest idea what they're talking about. If you even ask them to explain where they even get that from, most of them would be hard pressed to even come up with, *Well, see, it's this whole story about Iran supplied this certain kind of roadside bomb.* That's the core of the lie. And it's a lie.

And by the way, it was really more like 500 Americans died fighting the Shia, not six. It was 4,000 out of the 4,500 Americans that died in Iraq War II that died, Tom, fighting for the Shiites against the Sunni-led insurgency, pushed them into the arms of al-Qaeda and all of that. And boy, if you watch Fox News right now, it's amazing the lies, mostly just by omission. They would have you believe that the whole of Iraq War II was fought against the Shiite side and against the Iranian-backed side, when in fact, America favored the Shiite parties most backed by Iran and opposed the Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, who was the most nationalist, who wanted to marginalize American and Iranian influence. And they said, no, we'll take our bet on Dawa and the Supreme Islamic Council that are most backed by Iran, because at the end of the day, we think they'll need us more than they need the Iranians, which was a bad bet. It did not work out at all. And so anyway, I'm sorry, I'm telling this kind of out of order.

WOODS: No, that's okay. What I want to do, though, is read to you passage from each of two different people, both of whom you at least have heard of, one of whom you may know personally, who I would characterize as being on the paleo side of the right wing, who are normally pretty good on stuff like this, but on this, they disagree with you.

Let me read to you a paragraph that appeared on Facebook. And I don't want to mention names, because I don't want this to be about personalities; I just want to be about the ideas. It reads as follows:

"As an anti-interventionist who has opposed all US involvement in wars since World War II and nearly all our military interventions, I send congratulations to the President for taking direct action against a pirate state that has more than once attacked American diplomatic personnel. Peace should be an almost top priority for American governments, but it is a priority that comes second to the responsibility to defend the American people. If ever an American air strike was justified, this is it."

HORTON: What a bunch of crap. Give me a break.

WOODS: Hang on, hang on. Wait a minute. He says:

"I am reassured by this surgical strike that our president is neither a warmonger like the Bushes, nor a coward like Obama."

Now let me read the second paragraph.

HORTON: Oh my God.

WOODS: Hang on. This is from somebody else, a friend, and I'm not saying this in hostility. I'm saying this, trying to understand the truth here.

"International outlaw attacks American embassy, as his regime has done before. President orders his killing by American military personnel. Said personnel performed the mission with bonus result that other hostile general is killed too. All over the internet, Americans side with outlaw, effectively insisting it's open season on Americans."

How do you answer these?

HORTON: First of all, I mean, look at the last guy right there. *Oh, he killed another anti-American somebody, huh?* Why don't you ask him: what's that guy's name and what's his job? And what's the history of his life for the last 20 years? America just fought a war for the Badr Brigade. This guy Muhandis — I don't know how to pronounce it. But the guy that they killed, he was from the Dawa Party and the Supreme Islamic Council. He was one of the commanders of the Badr Brigade. His group was the core of the Iraqi army that George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld built for them. He's the guy who led the Iraqi militias, in alliance with this Iranian, in alliance with the United States of America, not just in Bush's war, but from 2014 through December 31st, or whenever, the end of last year, against the Islamic State.

Soleimani is an international outlaw and pirate and all this? No, he's not. What, just because they claim that? What makes him that? That some other guy with his same job description bombed the Beirut barracks back in 1983? Is that it now? And you know, I thought this was funny as hell. The NBC today has a piece by Ken Dilanian, who's their CIA mop-up boy — it's a proven fact from I think the WikiLeaks. I forgot where this comes from, but you can find it, where he was sending in entire articles to the CIA to check for him first and this kind of thing. Total CIA asset, Ken Dilanian, formerly of the *LA Times*.

And he's in NBC today, and he says, *By the way* — just one throwaway line — *By the way, the Israelis helped confirm the targeting intelligence against Soleimani and are in on this thing.* But then in the article, when you go down later in the article and they talk about Muhandis, the leader of the Badr Brigade that they killed, they say, *Oh, he was a head of an anti-American militia.* Never mind its name, because we're afraid you might have heard of it. *Oh, and he's suspected in bombing the American Embassy in Kuwait in 1983.* Really? I mean, come on. Ronald Reagan was selling missiles to the Ayatollah after that. You're telling me that we're still holding that grudge? And meanwhile, again, this is the guy that George Bush fought all of Iraq War II and that Obama and Trump fought all of Iraq War III, IV.

And your well-respected friends who wrote that on Facebook either have no idea what they're talking about, or they're being absolutely, deliberately obtuse so they can break their spine bending over backwards to defend this president. If they know who the Badr Brigade is and they know that the Islamic State is on the other side of the war, then they have to take everything that they said there back and shut up. Again, if you don't know what you're talking about, then just don't pretend that you do.

On my recent blog entry at Antiwar.com, right now at Antiwar.com/blog, is "Israel Helped Kill Soleimani," and there's a picture in there of Soleimani reviewing American troops, Tom. There's American Special Operations forces with their MRAPs standing there, and Soleimani and his group are walking through, essentially inspecting them like a parade, because they were allies working together as recently as last month.

And by the way, let's go back to what you said, too, about we're talking about Americans on an imperial outpost in Iraq. You know, Tucker Carlson made this point on Fox News: *this threat to Americans, this threat to Americans.* Are you talking about *in* America? *Oh, uh. Yeah, no.* Right, okay, so not a threat to the American people. What threat does Iran pose to the American people? Zero. Mike Pence had to lie on Twitter and say that they were in on the 9/11 plot. This Lara Logan on Fox News has to lie and say that they were in on 9/11. That's not true. Iran is not at war with the United States. Hezbollah did not knock our towers down.

And if Americans, and especially the Israel lobby in the United States led by the neoconservative movement, if they're mad that Iran has more power and influence in Iraq and in Syria than they used to, well, they should just stomp on their own feet, because it's all their fault. They're the ones who did it. Not only did they get rid of Saddam Hussein for them and fight a five-year civil war on their friends' behalf to kick the Sunnis entirely out of the capital city and the rest of it in Iraq War II, they also, by backing the al-Qaeda suicide-bomber terrorists in Syria, drove Assad deeper into Iran's arms. Before, they were friends and allies.

Now Syria is entirely dependent on Iran for its security and Iran's support for Hezbollah to support Assad, to protect his state from the CIA-backed bin-Ladenite terrorists. It's all their fault.

Now they want to cry, just as we talked about when Trump tried to get out of Syria twice now. They say no, Iran's power and influence in Syria has increased, somehow magically that has nothing to do with the history of the last 20 years. But now it's a problem. And this goes, in fact, back to the prelude to the attack on the American base. The Israelis have been bombing Iranian targets, they claim, and Shiite militia targets in Iraq for the last six months. How come that is always truncated out of the story, and the whole thing has to begin with a rocket attack on the 27th of December? The Israelis have been attacking who? Our allies, the Shiite side in Iraq, in a war the Israelis very much encouraged the American government to start in the first place.

WOODS: Can I just ask: maybe this is somewhat rhetorical, but when you look at the people you in the past have on this program referred to as the genuine bad guys, and sometimes they'll be an Islamic group, where you'll say, all right, these people are genuinely the cut-people's-hands-off barbarians, and there's nothing to be said on their defense. But how many of those people, that the US has really found itself in real conflict with, have been Shiites as opposed to Sunni?

HORTON: Well, look, there are bad guys on all sides of this thing. I mean, the religious authorities on the Shiite side are pretty totalitarian, as well.

WOODS: No question, but the point is, in terms of US conflict —

HORTON: Right, see, that's the whole thing, is Islamic extremism is not at the heart of the conflict at all. So you can have Islamic extremists ruling a state like Iran, and that's no real threat to us whatsoever. All that makes them a threat is that they declared independence from us in 1979 and have been able to maintain it. And you can have Islamic extremist Sunnis who mind their own business all damn day and never bother anyone.

But what's always at issue here is radical politics. And just like in America, fundamentalist Christians, what we call the Christian right, Ralph Reed and Jerry Falwell and that whole kind of Protestant, political Republican movement that grew up, that really started with Jimmy Carter. And then, of course, they moved into the Republican Party with Ronald Reagan. But through most of American history, there have been always these huge kind of revivalist movements every 20 years or so for Protestant fundamentalist Christianity, but very rarely does it translate directly into a political coalition. Oftentimes, religious people are concerned with the afterlife and just other issues, rather than dealing with politics.

You have all those same kinds of divisions over there, as well, so it's really not matter of who's a fundamentalist or how fundamentalist one group acts or the other, certainly not in terms of when the Americans are choosing which side to be on. That's absolutely not the criteria. The Americans have backed islamists since the days of the Cold War, when we inherited all this policy from the British in order to spite the nationalists like Nasser in Egypt or Mosaddegh in Iran. The ayatollah of the 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini, he actually had helped the Americans overthrow the Iranian government in 1953. That was why when he came to power, they weren't worried about it. They said, *We know this guy. He's all right.*

And they didn't mind his overthrow the Shah when he came to power in '79. The hostage crisis broke out later, 11 months later or 10 months later. That always gets truncated. When people talk about the Iranian Revolution, they make it sound like all the hostages were taken on the first day. It was at the end of the year that the hostages were taken. And there was plenty of time where things seemed like they might be all right before that happened. And then, of course, the Reagan administration had a covert relationship with the Iranians all along anyway. So did the Israelis for all along after the Iranian Revolution.

And that just goes to show right there how hollow all this stuff is about, oh, the dangerous — you know, just the same thing they do to David Koresh, right? *Oh, he's crazy. You can't talk to him. His beliefs are so unconventional that it means that you can't just send Donald Rumsfeld to go over there and shake hands and make threats, like you can with anybody else.* You know, they try to play that in that way, but the real history just completely belies that.

Again, I told this story a bunch of times on the show before and I know it's hard for people sometimes to keep track of the shirts and skins and all that, but when America invaded Iraq in 2003 and got rid of Saddam, the supermajority Shiite population stood back and watched. And the Supreme Islamic Council, at the behest of Iran, where they had been living for 30 years since Jimmy Carter hired Saddam to invade Iran back in 1980 — when they came across the border, they were under orders from Iran to cooperate with the Americans. *Don't resist them in any way. Do whatever they say. We're in the catbird seat. They're giving it all to us now.*

And then almost one year into the occupation in January of 2004, the Shiite Ayatollah Sistani said we want one man, one vote. You say you're giving us democracy? We want to see democracy. And in other words: hey, Bush, you want to start this war all over again, against the supermajority of the population. And Bush flinched right then. That was the end of that. *No, I guess I don't.* So then America sat there and oversaw the process by which Sistani's allies and the Iranians allies in Dara and SCIRI wrote the constitution. Then the big purple-fingered election of 2005, January 2005, one year later, they won the super majority and then went to war. This was when Donald Rumsfeld brought the Badr Brigade straight into the army. David Petraeus started building the Iraqi army with the Badr Brigade at its core. And they launched what was called the El Salvador option. Yeah, that's a reference to previous war crimes in the 1980s in Nicaragua and El Salvador when they supported the Iranians and the Contras at the same time they supported Iraq. Keeping track?

Anyway, the El Salvador option, it was: hunt down and kill the leaders of the Sunni insurgency — which just made it worse, and which just essentially was the launch of the civil war against the Sunni minority and the ethnic cleansing or sectarian cleansing campaign to kick them out of the capital city. And this is all — remember in the WikiLeaks? Chelsea Manning, sitting in prison again right now for heroically liberating the Iraq War Logs, that showed where Donald Rumsfeld had the military turning — any Sunnis they arrested were being turned over to the Badr Brigade to be tortured and murdered, with power drills.

And they were massacring the Sunnis — I mean, I was talking with Matthew Hoh about this actually earlier today on the phone, just talking, and I think he mentioned this also in the interview the other day. They would get up in the morning, and there'd be Sunnis stacked like cordwood on the side of the road, clogging the rivers, clogging the gutters, tortured and murdered by the thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands. That was the Americans and the Shia working together against the Sunnis. In the famous Clint Eastwood movie about Chris Kyle, *American Sniper*, they show the enemy have the power drills and are torturing and murdering their victims with them, when in the reality, those were our allies. Those were the Badr Brigade. Whether the American Army or Marine Corps were working for them or the other way around? Obviously a bit of both. Those were the guys who were murdering people with power drills. So anyway, I guess I got off on a tangent there about the war crimes, Tom.

WOODS: All right, well, hold on a minute. Let me bring you back to Trump himself and how we evaluate him as compared to Obama and Bush and this whole War on Terror fiasco. I have this tweet in front of me, January 8th of this year, 2020, Senator Rand Paul saying, "I spoke with Donald Trump today. The President shares my thoughts that the last thing we need is another ground war. He doesn't want endless wars. I continue to hope for de-escalation and diplomacy."

And whenever I complain about something Trump does in foreign policy, I get pushback from people who say — first of all, they say I didn't say the same thing about his predecessors. But

of course, they must not know me, because that's all I said about his predecessors. But they say you have to look at this by way of comparison. Compared to the others, he is obviously helping to end the wars and disengage the US from the Middle East. Do you see evidence of that?

HORTON: No. Well, let's break this thing into two things. First of all, on this issue, Trump was not trying to start a war. He was trying to get the last word in and say to the Iranians: don't you mess with me. And this entire crisis was created by him. He withdrew from the awesome nuclear deal. And I know your audience leans right-wing and have been completely brainwashed by all the propaganda —

WOODS: Oh, hold on a minute.

HORTON: — about that story.

WOODS: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Stop right there. In defense of my audience, overwhelmingly they supported the Iran nuclear deal, just so you know.

HORTON: Okay, great.

WOODS: The standard right wing has been brainwashed. Not my people.

HORTON: Yeah, no, I didn't want to — I was trying to absolve them rather than attack them, but I hear what you're saying.

It's true that anyone who's exposed to right-leaning media at all is just inundated with propaganda about the nuclear deal, when the reality is they weren't even making nuclear bombs in the first place. What was wrong with the deal is that it was superfluous, but the whole thing about *they got a pallet of cash*, it was their money that Jimmy Carter had stolen, that America had been sitting on this whole time.

And all they did — imagine that deal. I hate to give John Kerry credit. And I always say this: I really hate John Kerry so much. But here he made a deal where they locked down their program, broadened inspections, poured concrete in the middle of their heavy water reactor, and made all these concessions. And all our side did was give them some of their own money back and lift some sanctions. In other words, stop sanctioning them. So we didn't give them anything. We didn't do anything for them, except give them their own money and stop doing something that we've been doing in restricting trade. That was all America gave in that deal. It was a great deal. And what it did was it took the threat of war off the table, because it meant even the hawks cannot pretend that there's a nuclear threat here. There's just not. Their program is double locked down beyond any in history.

And Trump got out of that deal because of politics. Frankly, because Sheldon Adelson is a billionaire. He's a likud guy, very loyal to Israel, in his own words. He says so. He's a casino magnate, owns a bunch of casinos in Macau, and has billions of dollars. And at some point, Trump realized he might be able to afford his own campaign, but who's going to reelect the Congress? And in the last two elections, Sheldon Adelson has given the Republicans \$100 million both times and has been a major part — and he ain't the only one. You know, Bernard Marcus and very few other very Zionist donors give big, huge-dollar-amount contributions to the Republican and Democratic Parties, and they're just completely dependent on them.

And Donald Trump will do anything to please that faction, and so he's generated this whole crisis, including putting Soleimani and the IRGC on the terrorist list, which is just at that point meaningless. If the terrorist list are stateless groups and then you're just putting — that'd be like putting the American Delta Force on the terrorist list, when come on, it's part of the US Army Special Operations Command, or you know, Joint Special Operations Command. Just unnecessarily picked this whole fight with the Iranians, when everything was ratcheting down with Iran when he came into power, completely unnecessarily.

It's true that he hasn't started any new wars, but then again, he came into power with like ten going, and he's escalated every single one of them. And he's on the record detesting the wars

in Afghanistan, Syria, and Somalia, and yet he has escalated all three of them. He sent 10,000 more troops to Afghanistan, and he escalated the air war by some major percentage, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands more people since he ordered the escalation in August of 2017. That doesn't count?

He's increased the war in Somalia. In *The Washington Post*, they quote him saying, *Why are we even in Somalia? I don't even want to be there.* And Mattis tells him: you have no choice. And so he says, *Okay, fine*, and gives him 4,000 infantry. Not just Special Forces, he sends in the infantry to go fight Al-Shabaab.

He escalated the war against the Islamic State, told the military whatever restrictions that you're obeying in terms of your targeting and all of that, I want them as loose as can possibly be within the law. Go absolutely after him, 100%, which meant devolving the orders for action down the chain of command to the battlefield level in more cases and leading to many more civilian casualties. That was Iraq War III, again, the war fought for the Shiite militias in Iraq.

He's escalated the Special Operations and drone war in Libya, as well as spending money and putting his thumb on the scales and working with the allies in continuing the war in Libya and on down into Mali, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone. You have Special Operations forces crawling all over North and Western Africa right now in the name of the War on Terrorism.

Where has he rolled back any of it? Nowhere. The only place where you can say that it's been reduced in any way is they destroyed the Islamic State. There's nothing left of it. So when he came into power — and again, Obama built the thing in the first place. He doesn't get credit for destroying it. I'm just saying it is a fact that it was already almost destroyed by the time Trump was sworn in. He spent his first year in office essentially finishing the war, Iraq War III, against the Islamic State and turning them back into a stateless militia terrorist group, as they were before. And he's gotten us out of nowhere. And he's backed down and rolled over like Barack Obama for the generals on every one of these things.

And I skipped Yemen, which is the very worst one of all, which is a literal genocide, and where he, like Obama, is leading from behind and letting the Saudis and the United Arab Emirates and al-Qaeda take the lead in the war and take the responsibility. If you listen to TV, if they talk about it ever, they call it the Saudi-led coalition, when America is the world Empire and Saudi Arabia is our satellite. And the whole war was launched with a green light from Barack Obama and with American military intelligence and armaments support, naval support, air force support, from the very beginning.

And in fact, as long as I'm on Yemen, let me do one more tangent on this thing. Tom, exactly five years ago, in January of 2015, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Al-Monitor* both had big stories about how America was working with the Houthis, this group of Shiites out of the North, to target and kill al-Qaeda in Iraq. Now, I'm not for that. That whole project against al-Qaeda in Yemen has been terribly counterproductive and has helped lead to this crisis.

But anyway, in the narrow view at least, the Houthis, the Americans were giving them intel, and then they were taking it and they were killing al-Qaeda guys. And these are real al-Qaeda guys. These are al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula that bombed the *Cole*, that tried to bomb the plane over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009, that did the Charlie Hebdo attack. They're real al-Qaeda guys, including one of their founders was the father-in-law of one of the 9/11 hijackers, ran the phone switchboard house over there and all this stuff.

And it was Michael Vickers, General Michael Vickers, the Deputy Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, was saying, *Yeah, we're working with the Houthis. They're doing a pretty good job, got to say.* Just two months later in March of 2015, Barack Obama stabbed them in the back and took al-Qaeda's side against them. And that's the war that Donald Trump has continued for almost three years now, just two months shy of three years, has been the war for al-Qaeda and Saudi Arabia and the UAE against their enemies, the Houthis. Why? *Because,*

oh, I heard somewhere that the Houthis are friends with and backed by Iran. Even though the Iranians told them not to conquer their capital city. The Iranian support for them, even according to a lot of the hawks, their interests there are very limited. And as one great expert wrote in *Foreign Policy*, the Houthis are not Hezbollah. They are not the 51st state of Iran, in the way that Hezbollah really is, or to a much greater degree anyway.

And so under a fake excuse of an enemy that's not even an enemy, that's just a regional adversary, Obama and then Trump have us fighting on the side of our enemies. And I mean *our* enemies. I mean the guys who have shed the blood of thousands of innocent Americans. And it's because — again, go back. The 9/11 hijackers were not from the Axis of Evil countries. They weren't from Iran, Iraq, and Syria. They were from Saudi and Egypt, mostly, and they hate us because we're too close to their governments, Iran, Iraq, and Syria, they're in our way. Those countries were independent from American dominance of the Middle East, and therefore, supposedly at least, amount to a threat to the Israelis and to American interests of control of energy resources for the whole planet, and so, have to go. But that means that most of the time when we fight, we're fighting on the side of the guys who knocked the towers down.

WOODS: That's shocking to most people. When you've said that before, they can't believe this could be right. There's no way. This must just be Scott Horton's a weirdo. They can't possibly believe that this could be right.

HORTON: You know what it is? All you've got to do is just go back over it and keep your mind, keep your eye on who's the shirts and who's the skins in this fight. And it's oversimplifying. I'm not saying they're fighting about religion. I hate the old trope about, well, you know how these savages are, always fighting about who's a Sunni and who's s Shia. That's not what it's about. They're fighting over power. When I say the Iraqi Shia, I'm not talking about *the people*; I'm talking about the power factions, the Supreme Islamic Council, the Dawa Party, those chosen by the Ayatollah Khomeini and the Ayatollah W. Bush. I'm not trying to blame it on religion. It's about power, about land, about oil wealth, obviously, control.

And as always, it's about Israel. I mean, at the heart of this thing. And if you go to Antiwar.com/Scott for my last article, it's called "Iraq War Four," and in there I link to and I talk about the neoconservatives in the 1990s, the guys who ended up working for W. Bush and Cheney, that they were so stupid, that they believed these lies, that if they got rid of Saddam and put the Iraqi supermajority Shia population, their power factions, in control there, that that would give America total dominance over Iraq, and therefore Iran as well. And that then it would be great. They get even — Ahmed Chalabi had promised them: we'll even build an oil and water pipeline from Mosul to Haifa. And so in other words, these neoconservatives are absolutely as stupid as they are premeditated murderers and liars who got us into this war. And it absolutely did not turn out like they thought it was going to at all, and they've been trying to make up for that ever since. And so this is what they do. I mean, look at the war in Syria.

WOODS: Well, listen, let's wrap things up this way —

HORTON: Okay, well, I'll just say, so look at the war in Syria —

WOODS: I want to keep this manageable, but make your Syria point quickly, and then I have a wrap-up question.

HORTON: Oh, yeah, sure. I mean, why in the world would Barack Obama get on the side of al-Qaeda in Syria? It's not because he's a secret Muslim born in Kenya. He picked up that policy from George W. Bush, and that is: to try to make up for the fact that we gave them Baghdad in Iraq War II, we'll try to take Damascus away from them as kind of a consolation prize. He said it in *The Atlantic* in 2012 to Jeffrey Goldberg. The article is called "As President, I Don't Bluff." And Goldberg says, boy, getting rid of Assad would be a great way to hurt Iran, don't you think? And Obama says, absolutely. And so that is the explanation of the war in Syria for

the al-Qaeda terrorists that took place during the Obama years there. There's no other explanation for it. That is the one and only explanation. The Americans and the Israelis, their Saudi and Turkish allies, they all wish that America had not fought Iraq War II for the Shia, so they were trying to make up for that fact by getting rid of Assad. And that only blew up in their face too, only made Iran even more powerful than before, just like Iraq did.

WOODS: All right, here's how I want to wrap this up. What long-term difference do you think this particular strike by Trump and then the response by Iran is going to make? Is it just a blip on the screen in the grand scheme of things?

HORTON: You know, I'm not really sure about that. I think that, for all the people and all the different factions who are really upset about it, they essentially were all outside of American control and influence in the first place. I mean, there's a danger of continued reprisal attacks and grudges, very serious grudges about this going forward. It really just depends, you know, the future of America's position over there, what they try to do.

I mean, right now, the best thing I think that could happen would be for the Iranians to lean on the Iraqi parliament and their allies in the Iraqi parliament, that America enthroned there, to kick us out again and to mean it. And then that way, there's that much less to fight about. Again, they're not making nuclear bombs. There's no fight there. They're not taking advantage of power in Iraq now any more than they ever have been.

Part of the story here is Soleimani was actually on a peace mission. According to the Iraqi Prime Minister, he was delivering a peace message. The Iranian response to Saudi feelers for peace talks, which I think is a credible story and possibly even indicates that that was maybe even the real motive for killing him, was to try to prevent the Saudis and the Iranians from working things out. Less cynical things have happened.

But the ayatollah is not nuts, and he would have to be nuts to do something much worse and provoke a much worse response from the Americans. The degree of command and control he has over all of his loyal forces around the region and what have you, I don't really know. But this is a great time to call it quits.

Again, contrary to your Facebook friend there, Muhandis, the guy that they killed at the airport with Soleimani, was one of America's greatest allies for the last 17 years. And yeah, he's a bastard, a horrible torturer and a murderer. That was why America hired him. But if it's so true that he was so bad because of what side he was on that America had to bomb him, then now must be a perfect time to just call off our whole intervention there. I think even your Facebook friend would agree with that.

WOODS: All right, well, that's where we'll leave it. ScottHorton.org is Scott's website, but you want to check out the Libertarian Institute over at LibertarianInstitute.org?

HORTON: .org.

WOODS: Is it org, right?

HORTON: Yeah, man.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, LibertarianInstitute.org. Support Scott's work over there, as I do on a regular basis through Scott's own site, because he's doing important work and the world's a better place because he's doing it. So thanks again, Scott.

HORTON: Thank you, Tom.