



Episode 606: She Saw the Liars Up Close: Lt. Col Karen Kwiatkowski on the Iraq War Propaganda

Guest: Karen Kwiatkowski

WOODS: I wanted to talk to Justin Raimondo about this very subject, and it turned out that we just couldn't make the connection work. The sound was just not good. But then I thought, you know what, I love Justin, but I've talked to him before, and how is it possible that I have never talked to you before. So I feel like it was destiny that we were to have this conversation. I gave people a little bit of your background, but you know, it was very much like a resume kind of a background. Tell me exactly the kinds of things you were doing. Like, what exactly was your job description as of, say, 2002, 2003?

KWIATKOWSKI: I was a political military affairs officer, and I worked in Near East South Asia policy for the Under Secretary of Policy, so Doug Feith at the time was our big boss. And what we did is we were divided up into geographical regions of responsibility. I did North Africa, but I sat next to the people doing Saudi Arabia and for some time Iraq and Iran, which we can talk later, they morphed into Special Plans, those two countries. But all of the Middle Eastern countries had like desk officers, and what we would do is monitor and use intelligence from the various sources of intelligence – the DIA, CIA, different place – and we would put together policy recommendations, policy explanations, and advice, and basically answer the mail for the Secretary of Defense Under Secretary for Policy, that kind of thing.

So we pushed paper. We advocated for the Pentagon position, as it were, and that's what all those guys do. I mean, 20 years ago they would do that, 10 years ago, today that's what they do. They put together papers to advise the civilian leadership and sometimes the military leadership, but usually at the Pentagon level, OSP, you're advising the civilian leadership, the political appointees. And that's what you do. So we're reading a lot of intelligence; we're consuming a lot of intelligence; we're talking to people, our counterparts at the State Department, our counterparts in DIA, our counterparts at CENTCOM. We're the point people on these countries in terms of worker bees. So the rank level, the lowest ranking guy you would see there would be a major, and usually it's lieutenant colonels, which is what I was, or full colonels and that kind of thing. So it's high kind of middle management people, in terms of the military rank.

WOODS: Now, I'm interested in this general topic, because it just so happens that it came up in a recent presidential debate when Donald Trump just came out and said they lied us into the war, and that just sent the neocons into a frenzy. Now, if Donald Trump turns out to be a total disaster on every other front, which is quite possible, he will still at least have done one good thing for mankind –

KWIATKOWSKI: That's right.

WOODS: – and even the most hardened opponent has to concede. I mean, come on. Nobody says that on television.

KWIATKOWSKI: No.

WOODS: Nobody. Nobody this side of a radical leftist, and radical leftists don't even get on TV. So what I want to know from you is what is the – and the thing is, I know you could fill up the whole rest of the episode with this, but what is the basic response to somebody who says this is not a case of lying; it's a case of a lot of intelligence agencies, not just American ones, but a lot of them saying Saddam had the weapons and it was an innocent mistake that anyone in that situation, it would be very understandable why they might make that error. What's wrong with that response?

KWIATKOWSKI: Mm hmm. Well, everything is wrong with that response. First off, a lot of the intelligence agencies were not in consensus in other countries. That's one thing. The second thing is what we would refer to in that sentence, you're referring to intelligence agencies, we have this idea in our mind that these are objective agencies that are not ruled by their politically appointed leadership. And so what we saw there – and it's not the first time it's ever happened, of course, and not the last time – but what we saw there in 2002, 2003 was basically shaping bits and pieces of intelligence and also rumor and propaganda and unsubstantiated info bits and turning that into a storyline that supported with that politicians wanted to do and then selling that storyline as if it were intelligence.

So it was actually a perfect thing that they did, because they used the intelligence infrastructure, and then they had somebody to throw under the bus later, saying, well, the intelligence people gave this to us. And that's not really the case. This was a very complex propaganda game led by the people that we know to be – I say the villains, and I think they are villains, and this is the Cheney people and Bush and the political appointees that were part of the neocon network that was really ascendant at that time in Washington and certainly in the Pentagon. So yeah, everything's wrong with that assumption.

The intelligence community was used and intelligence was sold that wasn't intelligence, so when you look under the first layer of the onion you find a lot of angst within the intelligence community, not just in the United States but all over the world – angst at the pressure they were all feeling from their political leadership. And again, it wasn't just the United States. We know – I can't remember his name now,

you know, the funny guy we all make fun of, the former – the prime minister of Great Britain at the time –

WOODS: Tony Blair?

KWIATKOWSKI: Tony Blair, yeah, Tony Blair, the poodle. You know, we think about him; he was doing the exact same thing to the British intelligence structure. So yeah, the truth – and this is something you know and Ron Paul knows and anyone who pays any attention to life – the truth wins out and truth comes out. You cannot bury it forever. And the fundamental truth was that the fundamental intelligence, intelligence where we had high confidence did not recommend what Bush did. It did not justify – there was not threat identified to any level that would justify what was done. And then we have to say, well, why did they do it and why did they need the propaganda, the back story and the front story to bring the American people on why did they do it, well, that's a whole other question, and then we could go a whole show or two.

WOODS: Right. Well, here's what I want to ask you: if it's possible that the intelligence community could have felt cowed by the administration during that time, I wonder why it is that in late 2007 – I remember this distinctly. I was in Poland, and the only TV channel that I could understand was a BBC channel because it was in English, and they were reporting that the American intelligence, I forget which agency it was, had just issued a report saying that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons, and this was clearly an attempt to stop Bush from going to war with them. And I remember sitting there, cheering in my bed in the hotel there – I'll never forget this – thinking maybe it's possible that we can stop what seems to be this inevitable march towards war. How is it possible – I mean, surely the administration was leaning on them then on Iran? How did they get Iran right and Iraq wrong?

KWIATKOWSKI: Well, I think it's kind – I don't know the exact answer. I do know in 2000, 2001, 2002, as the neocon movement gained power with the onset of the Bush administration and started to put into play their foreign policy agenda, I think that there may have been some complacency in the agencies that, oh no, they can't do this. They're going to listen to us. We give the solid story and they will use that. And I think they underestimated the sheer aggression of the neoconservative movement within inside the Pentagon and around the Beltway. I think they underestimated it. I mean, remember those stories where – and I didn't witness this myself, but I read it in the newspaper – when Dick Cheney went over to speak with the analysts six and seven times at the State Department or at CIA. What was that about? You know, that was earth shattering. They never expected that.

So you've got to understand the nature of – you know how when you box or when you have a game and there's a strategy and if you keep surprise on your side, I think the neocons surprised the intelligence agency in 2001 and '2 and '3, and I think the agency itself was a little more wary and a little more prepared for this kind of game playing later on. And plus, within the agency, of course, given that CIA and DIA and even the State Department's INR, given that they were blamed – oh, you told us this was good,

and then we did it and it was bad – they were blamed, they were thrown under the bus. You know, when you throw somebody under the bus, they get wise. And they also check, and nobody wants to take that fall. So they go, well, where did we make a mistake? And there was a lot of, I think within all those agencies, I think a lot of not so much self-blame, but they were looking for the holes and they were looking for the problems.

Of course they knew what we don't know: the inside story in all those agencies of people who did resist, people who did quit or threatened to quit, people who did rotate themselves out of those jobs and said, look, this is wrong, we're not participating. We don't hear about that in *The New York Times*. That's not a story they want the American people to see. But those stories are well circulated in all of the agencies, so they have their heroes that they could use to stand up. I see this not as a policy argument; it's just human nature, it's a game that's played; it's a power game. So I think they were better prepared in 2006 and '7, and also the neocons who were involved, some had rotated out of those positions by '07 too, some of those more aggressive players, and so the game changed. The power distribution had shifted a little bit. You know, I think they weren't surprised. That's my assessment.

WOODS: I want to ask two things about the lies that were told. Let's leave the weapons off for a minute and think about the alleged link between Saddam and al-Qaeda, between Saddam and 9/11. Now, we know that at the height of all this, about 70% of Americans believed there was a link, even though the Bush administration could claim that we never came out and said that, I don't know where people are getting this idea, they say – wink, wink.

KWIATKOWSKI: (laughing)

WOODS: We don't know where they got that idea. But apparently like even now there are still about a third of Americans who think Saddam had something to do with 9/11. This is unbelievable. I want kids who are learning about so-called democracy in their social studies classes, I want them to take those textbooks and burn them, because nothing they're learning is true about how this stuff actually works. I cannot believe people still believe that. So let's talk about that. There was supposedly some meeting with Mohamed Atta in Prague and all that. Were you privy to any of that?

KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, well, what happened in summer 2002 where I worked, our division split into two. The Iraq-Iran desks, which used to be with us, had been beefed up with political appointees, neocons almost to a T. They were handpicked people. They eventually found a separate space to move to, and they moved out in August. And as we gathered together in our last combined staff meeting, we were told that they had new spaces and that's great, and we were told how we would deal with something, what they would provide to us.

And one of the things they would provide to us, that new Office of Special Plans, the expanded Iraq-Iran desk, filled with neocons and very few – maybe one intelligence-trained person who was on loan, they would produce talking points that we would then

include without edit, without addition or subtraction in any paper we provided up the chain to any of our people we were providing it to, verbatim. They were controlling the story. Now, that story from August, September, October, and early November, those talking points – oh, and we couldn't use November's talking points in December. We couldn't use August's talking points in September. Every time you needed one, you'd ask for the freshest one, the fresh one. And the fresh ones up until early December always included this famous meeting of Mohamed Atta with the intelligence agency of Saddam Hussein in preparation for 9/11. Oh my goodness, they had this meeting, and oh my gosh, that proved everything.

Well, the FBI had long circulated – and CIA – they knew this wasn't true, that not only was it not verified, but it was actually proven not to be true, because they were looking at Atta; they knew where he was, and he wasn't there, where they said he was at that time meeting with – so this was all fabrication. This was like, you know, you take hearsay, and you say, oh, that's true. Well, people do that, but you shouldn't do that in the Pentagon, shouldn't do that in the intelligence circles.

Intelligence people themselves had long advocated that that wasn't true, but that didn't stop OSP from including it until the FBI went public in the *Post* and *The New York Times*, publicized and quoted some FBI guy – I don't remember if it was attribution or nonattribution – but said the FBI actually knew where Atta was, and he wasn't in Prague, and he wasn't talking to this guy, and this whole thing was just a story. Now, this is after many of the Bush administration people had referred to this, and not just our talking points internal to the Pentagon; this was out in the media. And the FBI finally had had it. I don't know who in the FBI did it, but they went public with the truth, and immediately, the very next fresh version of talking points from OSP completely eliminated that statement. No explanation, no, "Oh sorry, we got it wrong." No, just completely stopped lying to us on that particular point.

And that was one of the things that really opened my eyes. I mean, I kind of knew what was going on; so did all of the people I was working with. We knew what was happening and how OSP was manipulating the story, manipulating intel and shaping things to justify this coming war, which had been in planning for the previous six months unbeknownst to me. I mean, they had guys in the Navy working from the previous May in 2002 on logistics for the invasion, for that. So the decision had long been made before. I didn't know that, but I certainly knew there was a storyline they were pushing.

And this Mohamed Atta case, when the FBI finally stopped it in its tracks by simply telling the truth publicly, even to prejudiced organs like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, that's all it took. It was eliminated from our story and basically went into where it should have gone. It went back into nothingness. But no apologies, no explanation. No, it was just, we can't use this anymore because the FBI outed us on this particular lie that we were telling. And it did help really change my mind. I was already in a bad place in terms of what I was seeing. Everything I was seeing was so wrong, but that was kind of a tipping point for me, seeing how easy it was to stop these guys from lying but how few people were actually stepping up and doing it.

WOODS: Right, right, right. You know, I can't remember actually whether or not they tried to – they must've – tried to tie the anthrax attacks to Saddam. Were they doing that too?

KWIATKOWSKI: Well, that I don't really recall, but I think that's one where the Bush people and the neocons could easily suggest it, in part because we had already accused Saddam of having these mass destruction chemical or bio weapons, and then having that happen.

WOODS: Right.

KWIATKOWSKI: But very quickly – again, that's an interesting case too, because very quickly they tracked it – I'm sorry about the sheep in the background –

WOODS: That's okay. It lends authenticity to the show.

KWIATKOWSKI: (laughing) I know; we're out in the country. But yeah, that's an interesting case, because the actual reporting domestically kind of quickly turned the focus away from Saddam Hussein, who of course had nothing to do with it. I mean, that was American anthrax. Now of course what Saddam had was American anthrax too, but the anthrax used against the Congress and some of the other people intelligence the media, that was pure American, never left our soil. We made it, and we used it, so I don't know. I think the truth kind of undermined the potential. Now, I can speculate that, you know, it certainly fit well with a terrorizing storyline that would be aimed at gaining more support for the invasion and toppling of Saddam Hussein and invasion of Iraq. Certainly it fit. I think the reporting of it allowed it not be as effective as it might have been, because we quickly found out that this was not something from overseas.

WOODS: All right, I want to go to the weapons thing now, because one of the defenses against the claim that the U.S. deliberately lied, and this was brought up in the debate, was the Colin Powell, somebody that everybody admires, Colin Powell went to the UN with all of this alleged evidence, so surely you're not going to tell me that Colin Powell was willfully lying, so how can you make such an accusation. What's your response to the Powell line in particular?

KWIATKOWSKI: Well, of course Colin Powell was lied to, much in the way – I mean, think about it. My little job pushing papers to policymakers and giving them background, I was forced by policy to include all of the lies that OSP was putting together until they decided they couldn't get away with those lies and they replaced them with new things. So we are lying. In my papers I was promulgating falsehoods that I knew to be false, because I knew what the intelligence was. Many of us did. We were promulgating falsehoods up the chain to Feith, to Wolfowitz, to Rumsfeld. Now, Rumsfeld and them knew it was lies and they wanted it that way, but we were also providing papers to other things. Those papers were used throughout the system. Multiply that – I mean, everybody who wasn't 100% on board was being used and utilized and lied to.

WOODS: All right, hold on a minute. When you say Rumsfeld knew they were lies —

KWIATKOWSKI: Yes —

WOODS: I mean, how can we know that, apart from he's a bad guy? I mean, I'm sure he did know, but I just want to know how can we know that.

KWIATKOWSKI: Well, at the time it was debatable if he knew or didn't know. I mean, we didn't have that kind of evidence. But I will say that a few years ago or actually — and I'm going to send you this so you can — you know, it might be something you want to look into later or talk about. But they're slowly declassifying documents, and there was a document declassified from that time frame, just recently, I think within the past several years. And actually it was from one of the general in the Joint Staff, and he was talking about something that he'd found out, and there's a note from Rumsfeld saying, we don't want this to get out.

WOODS: (laughing) Oh.

KWIATKOWSKI: Because it was opposite of the storyline. So do you see what I'm saying? We do at this time have a variety of physical evidence, of historical evidence that shows they knew they were creating a storyline, pushing a storyline that was not based on hard fact and that they were manipulating intelligence to do that and that they knew they were doing that. It was their strategy. We have the after-the-fact evidence of it. At the time it's not clear, and I think even we were shocked in the Pentagon to see the kinds of things that Colin Powell was saying when he gave that infamous speech at the UN, and they were things that, as we watched where I was, we knew 100% to be disproved and false, and yet it's almost like they scraped up every lie they could think of and put it in his speech. And nobody understood how he would have done that, how could he have possibly done that, and I think it's a combination of political pressure, loyalty — misplaced loyalty I'm sure that Colin Powell feels now — and being directly lied to. And I think you've probably had his chief of staff, Wilkerson, Lawrence Wilkerson — have you had him on?

WOODS: I haven't, should I?

KWIATKOWSKI: Oh yes, you really should. He is just quite frankly brilliant. He teaches; he's got a PhD; he was a full colonel, friend of Colin Powell's, worked for him for years and years and was his chief of staff during all of this. And he has become somewhat of a whistleblower since he left, and he is very articulate, and he's an Army guy, and he understands a lot of things that I don't about how the military conducts their actual killing people business. He understands that. I don't; I'm in the Air Force, you know; I don't see that stuff except from a distance. So he's great. You should have him on, Larry Wilkerson. But he has since explained a lot of what happened, and he thinks that Colin Powell was manipulated, politically pressured, and lied to all in combination, and that it didn't take him very long after that speech to basically withdraw professionally and personally from all of this, and his whole — what Larry and I and others who respect Colin Powell feel is that all of his gains and all of his

successes and achievements, and there are many in his life, in that era that he came up in, were basically shattered by that speech and that he was, again, used by the administration.

And I think even now, you know, there's a lot of anger. People like me, people who saw this were angry at the time. To me the anger that stays with me is how they treated people. People that were truly good people, honest people, who loved their country, the way the neocons treated those people as disposable, as people whose entire legacies could be crushed under their feet because it was convenient because it served their lies – and that's on top. They don't care about Americans, and they certainly don't care about human beings around the world who they have massacred, and I think "massacre" is not too hard of a word there. That angers me to this day. The rest of it, it's history, but the way they treat people, their contempt for human beings, for liberty, for truth, yeah, they're pretty disgusting. And a funny thing – I know I'm rambling here, but –

WOODS: No, no, no. I want you – if that's rambling, I want the whole show to be rambling.

KWIATKOWSKI: Okay, well, Dick Cheney, who is not obviously – I have zero respect for him. He was actually in our state of Virginia. He was down at Washington & Lee, they do usually about this time in an election year they do a mock election down there with the various candidates, and he was down there as one of their key speakers. And it upset me to think that anyone would invite Dick Cheney to anything. What he has done to both human beings, what he has done to the United States, people who believe in our system of government, you know, I'm kind of libertarian/anarchist. I wear the Republican stripe, but seriously, it doesn't bother me. They could build a wall around the Pentagon, cut it off, let it float away, wouldn't bother me – not the Pentagon. The whole Beltway. It would be fine. But there are people who trust in our system, who believe the good of it, and Cheney, he couldn't care less about any of that. I mean, he's – ugh, what a snake. It's just awful. So I do have a little residual anger against some of these people when I see them pop up. And the weird thing is, and you know this from all the things you're doing, they are popping up. Many of these same names and faces are talking heads, you see them on Fox News all the time, Fox Business –

WOODS: I know, and they are going to be back in force if there's a Marco Rubio presidency.

KWIATKOWSKI: Isn't that – ?

WOODS: So in my view that is the thing most to be avoiding.

KWIATKOWSKI: That's right. And you mentioned Trump earlier. I am a – well, you know, I like Rand Paul, and granted he's not in it anymore, but I love what Trump is doing, because he is frightening the neocons, and I don't think they can – he's really

frustrating, because he doesn't need them, and he says what he thinks; he calls it like he sees it. And of course that's his attraction. I think so many —

WOODS: Right, but then on the other hand he's listening to Giuliani, and he got the endorsement of Chris Christie, so what the heck?

KWIATKOWSKI: Chris Christie's an animal. Chris Christie is doing what's good for Chris Christie, and I think that's all that he ever does. Chris Christie's endorsement is meaningless in terms of the actual vote that's going to put Trump in office.

WOODS: Yeah, so do you think this is a question of he wants to be VP or he just wants to be on a winning bandwagon?

KWIATKOWSKI: He wants to be on a winning bandwagon, and he doesn't want Trump, win or lose, if Trump wins or loses, he doesn't want Trump on his bad side.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's smart.

KWIATKOWSKI: He's serious, yeah.

WOODS: I wouldn't either.

KWIATKOWSKI: No, Christie's just — he's smart. Nobody said he wasn't smart, but he does it for Christie, and as you see with politicians, you really have to understand them — and you know this — as sociopaths. So they do what is good for them. It doesn't matter how it's dressed up. Fundamentally they only do what is perceived as beneficial to them, and Christie is a model politician in that regard. But yeah, Trump is good because — and the other thing that's interesting, I love about him, is he says all these things, and of course many libertarians and a lot of Republicans are very upset with Trump. But what he says is on record. Now, he says a lot of crazy things, like, I'm going to build a wall 20,000 feet high. I don't know, whatever he says. Well, he's not going to do that. But when he says things like, Bush may or may not have lied us into war but actually he probably did lie — you know, whenever he goes on this road and he says these things it's part of the record, and now all of the rest of us — well, not you and I, but a good part of American population can now say that.

Okay, you think Trump, where is he getting his support from? Well, it's a lot of middle class people; it's a lot of people who served in the military, a lot of soldiers who came back from Afghanistan and Iraq who are now veterans probably being poorly served by the VA and mistreated by a lot of things, and they don't have jobs because the economy's been ruined by the Fed. So you've got these people who actually have a great deal of data about the lies that were told in the invasion of Afghanistan too and Iraq and then of course subsequent and then Libya and then Syria and all these things that we're doing that make absolutely no sense but certainly are part of the neoconservative storyline, they see right through that. So when Trump says Bush lied, he's — you know how people only hear what they only think?

WOODS: Right.

KWIATKOWSKI: Many people already think that. So when Trump says it, now we have the possibility for a real shifting, and I just think that is such a great service. And it's not comparable with what Ron Paul has done in his life —

WOODS: No.

KWIATKOWSKI: — because he's educated so many people and caused us to ask questions and understand how things work and be free and think free. He's done all that. But for a politician, Trump has served us well. If it stopped today, he has done a great deal, and he's not going to stop today. I think Super Tuesday is going to be a massive, massive sweep, relative to his historical primaries. I think it's going to be heavily for Trump, and this is good, because he's telling a little bit of the truth. And Trump's almost like an elephant, you know, like the blind man and the elephant. You can find a little piece of Trump that's very different from the other piece of Trump. You know, the tail's different from the trunk.

WOODS: Yeah.

KWIATKOWSKI: But there's a little piece of Trump for everybody, and the piece of Trump I like is probably what you like, you know? He's saying some things that need to be said, and they are true.

WOODS: And the fact that he said that thing about lying us into war in a South Carolina debate —

KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah.

WOODS: — was very interesting, because I had somebody — I have a lot of angry people now because I've said that I'm glad Trump is saying these things, and as I've told them, I'd be glad if Hitler said them. I don't care. I'm not saying Trump is Hitler; I can't believe I mentioned Hitler of all people, but the point is somebody's got to say it, and none of these other doofuses will say it. But I've got somebody saying, well, Trump is just trying to pander to the anti-war people.

KWIATKOWSKI: (laughing)

WOODS: In South Carolina? The seven anti-war people in South Carolina.

KWIATKOWSKI: I actually think Trump was smart in saying it in South Carolina, given how many military veterans live there and people who have actually served. I mean, South Carolina is not a wealthy state, has got a strong military tradition. I mean — not VMI, the other one — Citadel's there. But there are a lot of people who have served in the past 15 or 20 or 30 years in the military, and people who have served in the military and then they come back to South Carolina, they come from South Carolina, they served, their eyes are open, and they are cynical about government, as all

soldiers have to be and all soldiers are. And so he wisely chose South Carolina to say something that truthful.

And the other thing is, which – leave war aside. How many Americans in this country, particularly Republicans and probably libertarians and Constitutionalists, how many of us have said Obama's lying about this or that or the other thing? Well, we say it all the time. Now, do we have evidence? Who knows? But it is our sentiment that politicians do lie to us, so for Trump to say the president lied, for any reason, we are receptive to that. We the people are receptive to that, and he's feeding into that. Whether he's doing that consciously or just because he's who he is, I don't know. But you're right, it is enraging the neoconservatives, and it is enraging the establishment, the liberal New England establishment part of the Republican Party, and you've got to love that. I mean (laughing) –

WOODS: Right, right. No, of course, it makes me happy to see Mitt Romney feel like he's helpless and there's nothing he can do. That's a wonderful position for Mitt Romney to be in. Now, abstracting from Trump as a person and just focusing just on this idea about the war being a bad idea and it would be better if the dictators were back in charge and stuff like that, what interests me is the fact that whoever is saying it, those things can be said and they don't doom you.

KWIATKOWSKI: Mm hmm.

WOODS: I think Rand Paul was being given the advice that you can't come within a million miles of putting it quite that way, because this or that will happen to you. The latest poll I've seen is that Trump is at 49%. Now, you may say, well, that's because people are against immigration or there's some other issue. The point is his views on the Iraq War did not disqualify him. Now, I know Rand was against the Iraq War, and that's certainly great, but in terms of just coming flat out and saying these SOB's lied to us, it hasn't hurt him at all.

KWIATKOWSKI: No, not at all. In fact, I do believe there's a chord, a very responsive chord in the country which wants to hear that, because they feel in this particular case – in general they feel the government lies, but in this particular case of the Iraq War, they feel that way. So many soldiers and some airmen and all kinds of people who served in Afghanistan and in Iraq – because Afghanistan's still going on. The longest war we've ever been in, and it's produced absolutely nothing but more and more destruction, more and more violence, and certainly more and more opium, which, you know, I don't know who benefits from that. Who can figure that out? But these soldiers on the ground, especially those who have done several tours are seeing not just zero progress; they're seeing the impact of war, which is destructive and hateful and awful, and it creates even more enemies, and it is endless, and there is no strategy. They see that. They come home, and they tell their nephews and their nieces don't enlist. They tell them that.

But they can't really, you know – and so Trump says they lied us into war. Hey, it's what they already knew, and they respond to it. So it's not just that they didn't hear it

and they're listening to the other parts of Trump that they like about immigration and this and that. No, they heard him, and they say, you know what, he gets me, he gets my experience. And we have a lot of veterans out there, partly because we've had endless war since —

WOODS: Yeah.

KWIATKOWSKI: — for quite a while. I mean, we've still got angry veterans in the VA who were poisoned back in the first Gulf War and had suffered from all the shots and all the exposure to things. So there is a large segment of the population that has a negative opinion about our foreign policy, and Trump's feeding that. So it's not just that they didn't hear it and they ignored it and they didn't hold it against him; they embraced that message, and it is a very, very happy — very exciting. It's very exciting.

WOODS: You know, I've often had this theory that, not that they're doing it for this reason, but that the defense so-called establishment would think of it as a nice side effect, that the more big wars they have like Iraq, the more people are involved, then the greater the chance that the average American is married to, related to, or friends with someone in the military, so everybody feels like they have a vested interest in it, so everybody stands up and salutes, and no one can bring himself to think maybe the whole thing is based on lies. You know?

KWIATKOWSKI: Yeah, except from a military perspective, Iraq and Afghanistan are not big wars. They are fourth generation occupation wars, and those aren't wars, and those aren't — but those are Vietnam-type drag outs, which cause people to become very angry at government, and we saw that back in the — and this part of the Colin Powell legacy. You know, he saw and officers of his generation, military people of his generation and policymakers saw the impact of what an ugly, pointless war in Vietnam did to public opinion back home, recruitment, and all that other stuff, and they don't like this. The big wars you're talking about that they like are against big enemies, so now we can shift into a whole other show and talk about how they're creating Russia in particular as that big glorious enemy that will actually cause people to forget what this is all really about. But yeah, Iraq, as big as it may seem, is a tiny little fourth generation occupation. It is the ugliest kind of murder and mayhem, but it is not a big war, and most people —

WOODS: Okay.

KWIATKOWSKI: — don't even, when their kid comes back, and if he turns into a drunk or he shoots himself — and the suicide rate, of course, 22 a day. Oh, 22 a day. Where did I get that from? It's on a Trump sign. He's reminding people that 22 veterans a day commit suicide. Trump's doing that. You know, I have to say I like that. There's two points for him.

WOODS: You know, Karen, it's interesting you mention all this, because it makes me wonder — I don't have anybody in my immediate family in the military, so I don't know at all how any of this works. But it makes me wonder now based on what you said if

behind closed doors, not when they have to be in front of the public and everybody waves the flag and thanks them for their service, but when these families that are suffering as a result of extended absences and psychological problems and whatever, when they're sitting there really thinking through whether it was worth it, I wonder if they're singing a different tune.

KWIATKOWSKI: I think they are, and I think recruitment is suffering. They don't need as many people as they used to need. Pentagon budget is more on machines and stuff and technology more than it is people. But yeah, I'm telling you. Here I am, western part of Virginia, lots of military people, and we knew from the past several years of Ron Paul's campaigns, he's very attractive to military vets. Military vets are flocking to Trump a great deal. In fact, he's the only candidate I think that can say the military, actual people who have served, are coming to him.

The message to their families, if they talk at all to their families about what happened, and many of them can't, and that's a problem – that in itself is communicating something. But when they can talk and when their young little 5 year old or 10 year old or 17 year old niece, nephew, son, daughter comes and says, hey, I'd really like to do this, I think they advise against it. I am sure they advise against it. And I know people my age – I'm in the '50s; my brothers both served; I served – both of my brothers were in the area for the first Gulf War, not me. But none of their children – they are purposely preventing all of their children, as I did, from going into the military. Now, my dad, his brothers, and before them, you know, we kind of had a quasi-military tradition thing going. We ended it. We ended it in the late 1990s and 2000s. And so our kids won't serve.

Is that a good thing or a bad thing? Look, if we're ever invaded, you can't stop people from signing up. This is the nature of all countries when they feel an actual threat. We don't have an actual threat. The whole foreign policy is a complex manipulation of money policy and neoconservative vision and crazy, crazy ideas of controlling other countries through the spread of democracy. These things are very boutique. I think they're very boutique ideas. Most Americans don't embrace those ideas about our foreign policy, which is why our foreign policy is unpopular, which is good. It's a good thing. It should have been more unpopular 10 years ago or 12 years ago, but it's definitely I think unpopular now, and that is a positive development for sure.

WOODS: All right, Karen, here's what I want to do. I want to ask if you would be willing to come back on for another episode where we talk about the evolution of your thought, because I'm sure you did not start your career as, as you described yourself, a libertarian-anarchist, and I really want to know how that happened. Would you do that?

KWIATKOWSKI: Absolutely. Yeah, just give me a call; we'll do it.

WOODS: Okay, absolutely. Thanks so much for your time today. It was great.

KWIATKOWSKI: Okay, thank you.