

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 305 TRANSCRIPT

Jimmy Lee Wirt: This is Jimmy Lee Wirt, producer of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Be advised that the following interviews were conducted before the Iranian retaliation at the military bases in Iraq.

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. Hello David.

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: Happy New Year to you.

David Feldman: Happy New Year.

Steve Skrovan: And Happy New Year to the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello. Let's have a just New Year. We've got a great show here as people will realize –the rule of law transcends political differences.

Steve Skrovan: Yes, we have a very important show today. Last week we spoke to Dr. Bandy Lee, psychiatrist from the Yale School of Medicine, who warned us that the pressure of impeachment could make Donald Trump do something extreme. Well, it appears that he has gone and done it. He ordered, in his own words, the “termination” of a popular Iranian military general, the second highest ranking official in the country. Events continue to unfold, but this action has set off a series of threats and counter threats between the two countries. So today we're going to devote the entire program to discussing the Iran crisis. First up will be constitutional scholar and Senior Judicial Analyst for the *Fox Network*, Judge Andrew Napolitano. Bucking the prevailing winds of *Fox News*, Judge Napolitano has been a strong critic of Donald Trump on both the domestic and foreign policy front. In fact, according to *Newsweek*, Judge Napolitano predicted that in 2020 Trump would start a war with Iran. Unfortunately, that prediction is becoming more and more likely. What form that war will take is still to be determined. That's just the first half of the show. In the second half, we welcome back Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. A little over two years ago, Colonel Wilkerson warned us of the consequences of Trump pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal, that the end result would be going to war with a country of 75 million people. He said, quote: "If you like Iraq, you'll love Iran" unquote. We always deal with serious topics on this show, but I can't recall a tension and the stakes being as high as they are right now. And as always, we will take a short break in between to check in with our corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. Let's get to our first guest, David.

David Feldman: Judge Andrew Napolitano was a Superior Court Judge for the State of New Jersey from 1987 to 1995. He has also taught constitutional law and jurisprudence at Delaware Law School and Seton Hall Law School. Judge Napolitano now is in private practice and has been a Fox News senior judicial analyst. He] is the author of seven books on the U.S. Constitution, the most recent entitled, *Theodore and Woodrow: How Two American Presidents*

Destroyed Constitutional Freedom. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Judge Andrew Napolitano.

Judge Andrew: Oh, it's a pleasure to be here, gentlemen. Thank you for having me.

Ralph Nader: Indeed. Thank you. I will call you Andrew because we go back a long way and we both went to Princeton.

Andrew Napolitano: Yes, we do. We won't say how long that is Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Right. Well, let me start with this, one time when I was interviewing you on the occasion one of your books on the Constitution on C-SPAN, you declared that the Obama administration's justice department should criminally prosecute George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. And at the time I said, here's someone who really believes in the rule of law and constitutional order. And you also called out Obama's violations of Constitutional law with his open-ended military force in other countries without constitutional authorization or statutory authorization. And now you're raising questions about Trump's lawlessness. You know what happens, and I want your views on this, is that the breakdown of the rule of law is incremental. You know, you pointed out Woodrow Wilson's breakdowns on the rule of law and it just builds up and builds up and people don't realize how it could end up in terms of anarchy, in terms of dissolution, even though they see it happening in countries around the world. And now Trump has said with Article II, I'm quoting him "with Article II, I can do anything I want as president" end quote. He's also said, quote: "I am the chosen one" end quote. He also said, quote: "only I can fix it" end quote. So you have these megalomaniac aspects over an inherited tradition of presidential lawlessness from both party administrations going back many years. Why don't you explain to our audience, Andrew, what the consequences are for the United States, because there's still a lot of people who believe we're pretty invulnerable. We're the mighty superpower. It can't happen to us. And, of course, all empires devour themselves eventually. Why don't you just lay out generally before we get into the Iran details, what happens to a society that has that kind of hubris or that has that kind of indifferent citizenry?

Andrew Napolitano: Well, the United States, for the most part, the Civil War being the exception to this, has been kept together by fidelity to the Constitution and fidelity to the rule of law, meaning no matter the exigency of the moment and no matter the popularity of the president, no one is above the law's requirements and no one is below the law's obligations. And up until the Progressive Era again, the Civil War being the exception, the laws were pretty much followed and presidents recognized restraint on themselves. Another one of our Princeton buddies, though well before even your time at Princeton, Ralph, James Madison, when he wrote the Constitution, established the Madisonian form of government--the federal government can do only what the Constitution authorizes it to do and the rest of the governmental power is diffused among the States. Another Princetonian, Woodrow Wilson, turned that on its head to the view that the federal government can do whatever there is a national will for it to do, except that which is expressly prohibited by the Constitution. That Wilsonian rejection of Madisonian limited government has incrementally increased not only the size and scope of the federal government, but the power of the president of the United States. So, Barack Obama, whose attorney general justified his use of drones to kill Americans peacefully seated at a cafe in

Yemen, claimed that he had the power to do that because they were dangerous and they might harm us in the future. Candidate Trump condemned that until of course he came into power. And now we see that he has used the same power and almost literally the same justification to invade a formerly friendly country, Iraq, and assassinate the governmental official of another country, Iran who happened to be visiting Iraq at the time. The incremental increase in power and scope and depth and size of the federal government has had a radical and subtle increase in the power and scope and perception of self-immunity of presidents. And each American president from the Wilson period on up to the present has utilized the examples of their predecessors to increase their own power. In that respect, Donald Trump is no exception. He just is the present and most extreme utilizer of all of that power. It is dangerous to the concept of limited government. It is absolutely destructive to the rule of law. It's dangerous to personal liberty. And if a person who happens to be president says, I can do whatever I want under Article II, that person is utterly and totally unworthy of occupying the office.

Ralph Nader: Well, he also talks as if he's the monarch, you know, I will smash this in Iran; I will blow up that and I will impose draconian sanctions even though the impact is horrible on families and children in Iran, which itself is a violation of international law, disproportionate impact. Now we have....

Andrew Napolitano: But the president recognizes the legal limitations by international law, treaties to which we are a party. I think the people listening to us now, because they've heard you say this many times, realize that under our constitutional scheme, a treaty properly ratified by the Senate is the same level force and authority as the Constitution itself. So, for example, the United Nations (UN) Charter, which prohibits a member nation from invading the land of another member nation, prohibits a member nation from killing an official of another member nation without UN approval, is a treaty, which president Trump is obliged by his oath to uphold the Constitution to comply with. I don't think he recognizes that. In fact, in his case he might not even know it.

Ralph Nader: Well, he obviously didn't know Executive Order 12333, which was enacted first by Republican President, Gerald Ford, strengthened by Republican President Ronald Reagan, which clearly prohibits political assassination by any employee or official of the federal government. So right there, he's violating that executive order, which means he's not faithfully executing the laws. So, it has a constitutional violation as well. You know what I think Andrew, what's happened here is a total loss of history by the media. I'm just listening to NPR over the last few days. You know, they don't know when to start their analysis. So, they just assume U.S. troops in Iraq, the invasion of Iraq, was okay legally and that any defense by a neighboring country that's threatened. Imagine if that happened with Mexico or Canada in the U.S. They don't start there. So, I just want to very briefly go over the situation between U.S. and Iran. President Trump, no doubt is looking for the next polls on what he did in Iraq last week. And the polls reflect a lot of ignorance of history. And I just want to point out that if you're sitting in Iran over the last few decades, here's what you experienced and you're not going to forget it. In 1953 Washington overthrew the duly elected prime minister Mossadegh in Iran. He was very popular, and they overthrew him because he wanted to take back some Iranian sovereignty over the Imperial Anglo-American oil company that controlled Iranian oil. And then the federal government and Washington installed the dictatorial shah for over 25 years that terrorized people

in Iran who wanted to use a little freedom and wanted to use some democracy all with the backing of the U.S. Iranians don't forget this. And then in the late 70s, the federal government went into Saddam Hussein's offices and in effect said, you know, you can take a slice of Southwest Iran because the new Ayatollah regime is not in full control. So, they supported this invasion by Saddam Hussein in Iraq of Iran with hundreds of thousands of casualties over a few years. Iranians don't forget that. And then George W. Bush named Iraq and Iran, an "axis of evil", invaded and overthrew the regime in Iraq and Iran was saying, are we going to be next? And Iran now is completely surrounded by the U.S. Military. And we're saying, why are they in Iraq? Why is Iran in Syria and Lebanon? What would we do if the shoe was on the other foot? They're trying to defend their own sovereignty. And so now when ISIS rose, General Soleimani mobilized almost 500,000 militia in Iraq and also Iranian soldiers to fight ISIS, taking horrible casualties, which probably saved several thousand American soldiers' lives. You have a very unstable president. He's very ignorant of what's going on. He's very lazy. He has spent one out of every five days as president on the golf course. And what's happened to make the situation so dangerous for the American people, never mind over there in Iran, is that he has replaced two cabinet secretaries who used to push back a bit. Secretary of Defense, Jim Matheson and Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson. And he replaced former General John Kelly, who was chief of staff in push back in the White House, with yes men. He now has Esper, fresh out of Raytheon, as Secretary of Defense, yes man. He has Pompeo, Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, a yes man. And he has in the White House, surrounded by yes men, like Mike Mulvaney, so it's a very dangerous situation.

Andrew Napolitano: We might find out when these secret briefings are given to members of Congress, the nature and extent of resistance that the president got. I tend to agree with you that the resistance was probably non-existent or absolutely minimal for the reasons you have articulated. But in the real world there would have been a roaring debate over this involving the constitutionality, the lawfulness, the political ramifications, even the philosophy of doing all this. We don't know and we probably won't know, unless one of the recipients of the briefing leaks it, or goes to the floor of the House or floor of the Senate, where they can discuss it with impunity under the Speech or and Debate clause of the Constitution. We may never know the nature and extent or whether anybody challenged the president. We do know that the military gave him a menu of things to do because Iran has been under his skin and the most extreme of course was the assassination. And he jumped at it immediately and apparently jaws dropped. They just didn't expect him to do that without a thoughtful analysis of all the other options that were on that menu.

Ralph Nader: And it seems to have been no real intensive consultations here in the Situation Room in the White House. He was down in Florida, Mara Largo playing golf, took a break from a dinner and said, go get him, and then went back to the dinner.

Andrew Napolitano: Well, that's the way this president operates. This is not a Barack Obama who Mario Cuomo likes - there's a name out of our past - who will anguish over a decision and look at all the ramifications. This isn't even a George W. Bush. This is someone who makes decisions very quickly with minimal information in front of him and then goes back to doing whatever he was doing before the decision time came to pass.

Ralph Nader: Of course, many people including you Andrew predicted that he would pull something like this as a wag the dog reelection ploy and that he would do this to distract attention from the impeachment proceedings about to begin in the trial in the Senate so...

Andrew Napolitano: You know, when I made that prediction, Ralph, it was just a gut feeling that I had. It was about four days before the assassination. I didn't know what was coming. I was as startled as anybody else when we learned that the general had been assassinated. Part of the prediction was based upon, as you know, before he was president, he and I were friends and I think I understand the way he thinks and the way he operates and the way he likes people around him to think and operate. And I was not surprised when this happened. I was deeply distressed but not surprised.

Ralph Nader: Is there any limit to the fealty of the Republicans in the Senate? Don't they have any line to cross? I mean they shouldn't be upset by convicting Trump because then they'll get their real choice, which is Mike Pence as president. I mean they really would like him over Trump because Trump is always embarrassing them. He is beating up on them by name. He's a wild card. He's unpredictable. He's foul. He's breaking the moral fiber of America down to the households where kids are sassing their parents quoting Trump. What's going on here? You see any break on procedure in the Senate?

Andrew Napolitano: I don't, I don't. I saw a very fine interview of Rand Paul on Fox News not too long ago in which he sounded like you and his father and then the interviewer switched to impeachment and he sounded like the rest of the Republicans. So I don't think this is a crack in the wall. What might produce a crack in the wall will be if John Bolton testifies that the president told him to fill in the blank, and whatever the fill in the blank is, is horrific. And the only way to counter this would be for the president himself to testify. If the president goes under oath, you'll see cracks in the wall because he won't be able to control what he says under oath.

Ralph Nader: Well, let's look into this Senate situation right now. Together with Bruce Fein and former Library Congress, constitutional scholar, Lou Fisher, we sent a letter to Nancy Pelosi and Mitch McConnell basically saying, look, there's so much bias and prejudgment in the Senate, conflicts, the Senate should authorize chief justice Roberts to establish the procedures--the witnesses, the privileges, the procedures for questioning, et cetera. And then if the Senate disagrees, they can, one by one, 51% of the vote, overrule chief justice Roberts. But at least there would be a sense of decorum and impartiality on the part of the chief justice who is a Republican and the press didn't pick it up. But I think that it's very important, quite apart from whether he's guilty or not, to have the Republicans face up to the procedural issue. Because I don't think the 20 Republican senators running for reelection, although they may want to acquit Trump, don't want to face the kangaroo court accusation by people out there in the country. And people watch these very popular television shows like *Judge Judy* and so on, can't envision a trial without witnesses, which is what Mr. McConnell seems to be pushing for, a quick acquittal. What's your view on having Chief Justice Roberts be given the revocable authority to establish fair procedures for the coming trial of Donald J. Trump?

Andrew Napolitano: Well, I agree with that. I say that as somebody who knows his brain pretty well, the chief justice. Even though I've disagreed with him on many issues, I don't challenge his

intellectual honesty or his fidelity to the rule of law. Now it's weird having presided over more than 150 jury trials myself, the concept that if I made an evidentiary ruling in the courtroom that the side that lost that ruling could appeal to the jury, and the jury could overrule me, I mean that is just bizarre. But that's what this is. Fifty-one senators, any combination of fifty-one, they don't all have to be from the same party, can overrule a decision from the bench, so to speak, by the chief justice. But honestly Ralph, I think they can only get away with that so many times before the disrespect for the system and the politicization against the king. People that argue that impeachment is a reversal of an election are really arguing against history. Of course, it's the reversal of an election and it comes about when the people or person elected manifests behavior or traits, which had the electorate known at the time, they wouldn't have voted for the person. That's the whole purpose of it, but it hasn't happened Ralph. It just hasn't happened. I don't, again, unless president Trump takes the stand under oath and lies under oath, I don't see a crack in that Republican wall.

Ralph Nader: You know, he's escaped deposition, unlike Clinton who lied during the deposition and was impeached by the Republicans in the House for it. He's escaped all depositions. He's like a fugitive from justice ever since he started his business career and turned into a failed gambling czar in New Jersey. There's a book just up by a former prosecutor Zirin. His name is Z. I. R. I. N. going through this extraordinary escape from the rule of law in all kinds of ways extending right into the presidency. And he thinks because he's gotten away with everything so far, he can continue to get away with everything in the future. What do you think the prospects here of reigning in this constitutional outlaw?

Andrew Napolitano: You know, the Supreme Court has before it efforts of the Manhattan district attorney to subpoena financial records from the Trump organization. This is records from before he was president. There's no immunity whatsoever from before he was president, yet he's claimed it and the Supreme court has agreed to view that. It also has other subpoenas before it. I fear, I fear that the Supreme court is going to invalidate those subpoenas, which means it will be up to local prosecutors after Donald Trump leaves office to examine what he did, and by that time, nearly everything he did in his career would be beyond their reach because of the statute of limitations. The D.A. in New York city, Cy Vance, has articulated areas of behavior and has eye witnesses, but he needs documents in order to support it and the clock is ticking as to whether or not he can get those documents. The lower courts have all ruled in favor of these subpoenas. Two of them are from Congress; one is from Cy Vance.

Ralph Nader: And you think the Supreme Court is going to radically reverse precedent here?

Andrew Napolitano: I hope I'm wrong. It's just a gut feeling I have. Sometimes my gut feelings are correct. Sometimes they're dead wrong. Honestly, I hope I'm wrong because of the rule of law. He cannot be above the law's requirements even though his public behavior and public boasts have indicated that he does think he is above the law's requirements.

Ralph Nader: The danger in the next few months is, if he provokes the retaliation by Iran, and it goes back and forth, becomes more and more warring and more serious and his polls start going up, he can bring down our Republic, because he's perfectly capable of inciting violence domestically. He already has. He said if he is impeached, there might be civil war. And he incites

riots in the streets during the campaign if he's unfairly defeated. There's nothing beyond his sense of restraint here that could happen and what he's done is he's given the Islamic Republic of Iran the opportunity to create such a crisis that it can damage the Republic of the USA. I mean, we're dealing here with something that is not controllable by established institutions anymore.

Andrew Napolitano: Well, the president's behavior grossly threatens the security of the Republic the remedy is impeachment. That is the only lawful remedy there is. He would argue the remedy would be to vote him out of office. Now that election is going to come in 10 or 11 months come hell or high water unless he's removed from office and barred from seeking reelection, an unlikely eventuality. But that's where we stand. I hope and pray that we don't, we don't see any violence. Ralph.

Ralph Nader: The danger here is if there is attack inside the U.S., he's going to use it to get reelected. I mean, look what happened after 9/11.

Andrew Napolitano: Well after 9/11 the destruction of civil liberties was reprehensible, and it continues to this day. We still have the Patriot Act and we still have the federal government capturing every keystroke and every conversation on every mobile device.

Ralph Nader: We got to say to the American people, “don't fall for it America” because it's the storied way where dictatorial politicians can marshal, rallying around the flag, due to crises and wars that they themselves created in order to perpetuate themselves in office. It's called an elected dictatorship.

Andrew Napolitano: Amen. Now, when are you and I going to do a public program together, much like the podcasts that we're just completing. It's a joy to work with you, Ralph, just like it was many years ago.

Ralph Nader: Well, on that note, and thank you for your time. Andrew Napolitano, a former superior court judge in New Jersey and author of seven books on the Constitution, would you agree with Bruce Fein, who's a constitutional litigator who just recently called the U.S. Constitution a peace plan?

Andrew Napolitano: The U.S. Constitution is barely honored today. Yes, we still have three branches of government and yes, we do have elections, but it is of no more value than the fidelity to it, of those into whose hands we repose it for safekeeping. Since Jefferson, with the possible exception of Grover Cleveland, we haven't had a president who safely guarded the Constitution.

Ralph Nader: I think what Bruce Fein meant, Andrew, is that the Constitution was not an aggressive war authority document. It was a defensive war document and it was an institution of restraint on war making. And, of course, George Washington's farewell address warned about foreign entanglements and foreign influence on our politics.

Andrew Napolitano: I rarely disagree with him on anything, but he's right on the Mark on that, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, that's why he called it a peace plan because it kept the reins on the president from becoming another aggressive monarch like King George the third. Would you agree with that?

Andrew Napolitano: Yes, I do. Ralph, I have to go all my best to you. I thoroughly enjoyed our time together.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much. Look forward to your appearances.

Andrew Napolitano: Next time. All the best.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Judge Andrew Napolitano. We will link to his work@ralphnaderradiohour.com. We're going to take a short break. When we come back. We're going to continue our discussion of the Iran crisis with the former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State, Colin Powell, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, but first let's get our weekly Corporate Crime Report from our corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. You are listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*; back in 60 seconds.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, January 10, 2020; I'm Russell Mokhiber. Pyrethroids, a type of pesticide commonly used in consumer products such as lice treatments and unconventionally grown crops, are associated with an increased risk of death. That's according to a new study published in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*. In this study, researchers followed people for an average of 14 years and found that those with more exposure to these chemicals were somewhat more likely to die from any cause than those with the lowest exposure and they were three times more likely to die from heart disease in particular. Pyrethroids, which currently account for about 30% of the insecticides used worldwide may also be used in pet flea medications and to protect against ants, roaches, mosquitoes and ticks. The authors of this study said that there was little past evidence at any potential heart harms from these pesticides. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you Russell. A little over two years ago our next guest spoke of the dangers we faced with president Trump pulling the United States out of the Iran nuclear deal. He said, quote: "You're not isolating Iran. You're isolating the United States." David?

David Feldman: Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired U.S. Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. He is the Distinguished Adjunct Professor of Government and Public Policy at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. During the course of his military service, Colonel Wilkerson was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Bronze Star among other awards and decorations, At the Department of State he earned the Secretary's Distinguished Service Award as well as two Superior Honor Awards. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson

Lawrence Wilkerson: Good to be with you.

Ralph Nader: Welcome, indeed Larry, let's get right to the point here. Why did Donald Trump assassinate general Soleimani, who was an ally with the United States, marshaling hundreds of thousands of militia against ISIS, taking casualties that might have been imposed on U.S. soldiers in those months and months of fighting? Why did they attack someone who was in close coordination with the Department of Defense in that fight?

Lawrence Wilkerson: Let me frame it for you, Ralph. Let me take you back to a meeting in the Roosevelt Room just off the Oval Office with President Obama in September of 2015, seven years into Obama's eight years. The first words out of President Obama's mouth at that meeting with John Kerry, his Secretary of State at the time, sitting right beside him, were these quote: "there's a bias in this town toward war" unquote. He then went on for some time to talk about essentially how he wasn't sure what one would do about that bias if one were a president intending on avoiding war. Well, Trump came to Washington to drain the swamp, supposedly, an alligator jumped out of that swamp, grabbed Trump by the throat and now has him in its total grasp. But blob wants war with Iran and the blob led by Pompeo, Lindsay Graham, Esper and others is going to have that war come hell or high water.

Ralph Nader: Well, why don't you draw the scenario? Iran now has lost its number two official in the government. No other president has attacked and killed a high government official without a declaration of war.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Ralph, since the Treaty of Westphalia, as far as I can tell and I've been doing an Ordnance [Army Center of Military History] search to see if I can find an occasion, no State has ever publicly assassinated a recognized leader of another State.

Ralph Nader: Well, what's the scenario coming up then? Iran has said they're going to retaliate in due time in their way and it doesn't have to be in Iraq. It could be any number of countries against what are called American interests. You have said that Trump now has handed the initiative to Iran and now Iran has considerable control over the process.

Lawrence Wilkerson: A military professional will tell you, a good military professional will tell you, that you never surrender the strategic initiative in particular to your enemy. That's what we did with the strike on Soleimani. The course of events now is up to Iran. They can respond across the globe. They can respond in the region; they can respond with Hezbollah, should Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, agree. They can respond with all manner of proxies that they have from Yemen to Iraq to Syria. It's up to them. Now I am given some hope, but I'm given a slight degree of hope that the leadership in Iran, being markedly smarter and more strategic in its thinking than the leadership in Washington, has made a decision that they're going to respond not in an overly escalatory way, but in a way the international community will think is proportional. What gives me hope in that regard is their actions with regard to the nuclear agreement, the JCPOA. Right now they have not withdrawn from the NPT, the nonproliferation treaty. They have not kicked the inspectors out--the IAEA inspectors. And they have told Russia and China and apparently Europe that they want to, as much as possible, stay in the nuclear agreement. So that leads me to believe they will make a response at their own time of choosing and their own place. But it will be a proportional response, perhaps taking out some U.S. unit or some U.S. leader and in that regard, I'm not so sure I'd be happy to be any U.S. leader at this point. The problem with that

though is that this group, Esper, Pompeo--Pompeo at the lead of it--is going to interpret anything they do is escalatory. That's what I'm worried about and convince the president that it's escalatory and then the next act will be ours, which will probably be a bombing campaign against Iran and then we're off to the races and if we think Iraq was a catastrophe, wait for this one, it will be 10 times worse

Ralph Nader: With huge domestic impact on the election year.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Yes, yes. And that's another thing that concerns me about Trump being approachable in this regard. In other words, Trump making a decision based on Pompeo and Esper's recommendation to bomb Iran, because I think he's going to be increasingly domestically imperiled. And he's going to be increasingly losing his base throughout the spring and summer and so he's going to be very apt to do something like what they would recommend--start a war with Iran.

Ralph Nader: Like 'wag the dog' in order to inflame public opinion, rally around the flag and get him reelected as president. That's his game plan. Certainly, his domestic policies are not gaining many votes. And his enormous expenditures in the Pentagon, way beyond what the generals asked for, is not getting him any votes. So it's a 'wag the dog' wage war against Iran and then get reelected. What do you think the counterforce can be for that, so America doesn't fall for it again as it did after 9/11?

Lawrence Wilkerson: I think it has to be the counterforce that again, in that meeting with President Obama, he identified to us. You may recall that at that time, John Kerry, his Secretary of State, was advocating ground forces, U.S. ground forces of great number in Syria, and President Obama didn't do that. Well, one of the reasons he didn't, he explained to us, was that the cards and letters and emails, telephone calls, and constituent visits to Congress and the similar things to the White House, convinced him the American people would not support such a move--not support the United States getting so heavily involved in Syria. And so he backed off. I think he was glad to back off after Libya. Libya had been a disaster, but he backed off. That's what has to happen this time. The Congress, the president, everyone has to hear from the American people that they do not want a war with Iran. 60% now in the polls affirm that, they say they don't. We need an outpouring from those people.

Ralph Nader: I think you're right. You know when Obama wanted to go into Syria with U.S. soldiers, he said, well, "I want to go to Congress and get an endorsement for that." And I think the "no" responses by the American people was like 97 to 3. 97 saying no, no matter whether they were Republican [or] Democrat coming in on emails, letters, calls, you name it, and you are right, that did turn it around.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Yeah. A lot of constituent visits too. I know the FCNL, Friends Committee for National Legislation, for example, put a lot of people on the Hill in a lot of Senators and Representatives offices.

Ralph Nader: Now on that, let's flesh that out a bit. Often public opinion can be turned by stand-up, courageous decisions by former government officials. And you have here two very

prominent African Americans, General Colin Powell and Barack Obama. They have been exposed to the racist bigotry of Trump. They have been exposed to dismantling programs that they favored, especially President Obama. Trump gleefully is trying to tear apart healthcare coverage and other health and safety positions that Obama was identified with and environmental positions. And they haven't spoken up. And you have all kinds of other retired Republicans: Christie, Todd Whitman, who was the EPA Chief and former Governor of New Jersey; she thought that Trump should be impeached a long time ago. But why aren't these people...and there are so many others. There's Eric Holder who was Attorney General under Obama. These are the people that could transform and galvanize public opinion. I haven't begun to name many others, former senators, former governors, they're all keeping quiet. Why?

Lawrence Wilkerson: You've got people like George Schultz, Brent Scowcroft. You've got a host of people out there who could be saying things. I don't know Ralph. I simply do not know. I don't even know why the man, I spent some 12 plus years with, Colin Powell, isn't on the hustings, isn't out doing what he did so well, for example, to sell the war with Iraq. It's beyond me. These people don't seem, anymore, to have a real fundamental interest in the course of this country. And my party, the Republican Party is disgusting in that regard. Look what's happening with the impeachment. I'm going to campaign as vigorously as I possibly can in Maine against Susan Collins. She is a coward. I am going to campaign against Lindsey Graham in South Carolina as powerfully as I possibly can. That's my home state. Until I go to my grave, which is probably not too far away, I'm going to see to it that these people get unelected. But it will probably be too late; their harm will be done. They do not care about anything but power and money. They no longer give a damn about their country.

Ralph Nader: I think you make an interesting point here in the sense that everything Trump has done hasn't really inconvenienced these people. They're fairly wealthy. They got income security. They can go and come where they want. They get good book advances and speeches. They haven't been personally transgressed yet, but don't they have a red line? What would be the red line for Colin Powell Barack Obama, Christine Todd Whitman, George Schultz? They got to have a red line.

Lawrence Wilkerson: I have no idea, Ralph. I really don't. And I've got to pick up on what you're saying and say, look at how many Americans in general, lack a red line: the number of people that are involved in that deployment to Iraq, for example, from the 82nd Airborne; the number of people that are bleeding and dying and suffering from this endless almost 20 years now of war--stupid war. Are those people at the bottom of the rung in our society? They are basically the people from fourth and fifth quintile of American youth. It's incredible what we're doing Ralph. This is the most inequitable two decades of war, of war period in American history. Look at Doug Kriner and Frances Shen's work *The Casualty Gap*. They substantiate in that work that this is the most inequitable warfare period in America's history and they go all the way back to the Civil War. We are sending poor kids to bleed and die for the oligarchs, for the plutocrats, for the rich people, for all those people you just named who are sitting around doing nothing because they're comfortable. That's what we're doing. The Greeks said, "Old men, send young men to die in war." Well, we have brought it to perfection.

Ralph Nader: And it's going to boomerang on domestic livelihoods here as the bloated military budget, draining money for infrastructure, repairing bridges, schools, public transit, you name it. It's going to come down harder and harder. As I've said often, all empires eventually devour themselves. This is an exceedingly dangerous time, and everybody has got to step up. Everybody's got to see, that they've got to put their arm to the oar of the lifeboat of democracy and justice in America. Let's go to the inside the Trump administration. He used to have three high officials who would occasionally push back--Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson and former General John Kelly, who was his Chief of Staff in the White House. He's now replaced them all with yes men. So there's nobody in this department to push back to this deprived, unstable, ignorant, warmongering, narcissistic president that's there. So how dangerous is that? Is there anybody inside the administration that can read the Nuremberg rules and say, no, I'm not going to take an illegal order from the president because that would be a violation of law and my oath of office as an official.

Lawrence Wilkerson: I think you've characterized it fairly well, generally speaking, but specifically you've missed something. I think Pompeo and Esper, and I'm sorry to say Mark Milley, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, unlike Jim Mattis; all three of these people and others in their support like Lindsey Graham and Tom Cotton and so forth are using the president now. They're hiding behind the president and they're using the president to get what they want, which is a war with Iran and ultimate regime change. This has been Pompeo's lifelong dream at least probably since he graduated from West point. They want to unseat that government in Iran so badly that they will lie, cheat, steal, do anything necessary to get it done. And when they captured Donald Trump for this strike that killed Soleimani, they moved their cause a long way down the road. That's what they're after. So it's not necessarily that there are yes men there now because I don't really think Donald Trump wants war with Iran. It's going to damage him majorly politically if we get another war, because as I said, 60% of the American people already polling that they don't want a war with Iran and they can't make Iran look bad enough to change that substantially. So they've captured the president, the blob, the national security state. What Obama said was the bias in Washington towards war has captured this president. Somehow, another possibility here is to extricate him from that prison they put him in.

Ralph Nader: Well, that's a unique viewpoint. I mean, most people think he's the one who gave the Pentagon the order out of a menu of choices and that Pentagon didn't prefer the killing of General Soleimani.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Well, Esper was right there working with Pompeo for a week beforehand. They were the people who gave him the options. They were the people who put the spin on the best option was to kill, Soleimani. They had other options that were less dramatic, less game changing. They were the ones who pushed Trump into it. Trump, let's face it, Donald Trump is an ignorant narcissistic know-nothing. You can push him any way you want to. If you give him the idea for even an instant that it will be an Osama bin Laden moment, an Al-Baghdadi moment, whatever it might be, that will increase his base of support for him. If you convince him, especially away from Washington down at Mar-a-Lago, if you convince him that, Oh, that's the thing, that'll give you the greatest boost, he'll do it. The next day he may regret it terribly, but he would never tell anybody, though. He doesn't think about anything long enough to have regrets. This is a dangerous situation, but it's made more dangerous by the fact he's so

pliable with regard to domestic politics and now he's got two very devious people who've been together since West Point, since they were fundamentalist Christians at West Point, and who have this hard-on for Iran and want to take the United States into yet another war. And another, let's face it, it's a war for Israel in Pompeo's eyes and Esper's eyes, in Graham's eyes; it's a war for Israel. It's a war to make Israel safe.

Ralph Nader: You think Netanyahu advised Trump, saying you could get away with this attack on Soleimani because we've had hundreds of bombings of Iranian facilities in Syria. Actually, they said hundreds and nothing happened. And Iran is a paper tiger and go for it.

Lawrence Wilkerson: I think that may have been the initial take on it. But I hear right now, and I'm reading right now, and I'm hearing from intelligence folks that tell me that Netanyahu is having second thoughts because he realizes that if Nasrallah were to agree-- Hezbollah's leader in Lebanon--if Nasrallah were to agree and were pushed by Iran, ultimately this biggest supporter for Hezbollah, to do something in Israel, they would damn sure do it. And it would not be good for Israel. And it would not be good for Netanyahu who is facing a third round of elections and will go to jail after those elections are over if he loses. And he's sure to lose if Hezbollah brings a major blow to Israel. So, I'm hearing right now that Netanyahu is having second thoughts about his support for this killing of Soleimani.

Ralph Nader: Larry, this historic turning Iran [inaudible] into our enemy, going back to the Shah of Iran, the overthrow of Prime Minister Saad, explain to our listeners who's to blame here for turning Iran into an enemy or the U.S. into an enemy. Who is in whose backyard here in other words?

Lawrence Wilkerson: Let me say that If anyone wants to hear the best explanation I've heard of the history of U.S./Iranian relations, they should tune in to Amy Goodman's *Democracy Now*. It's probably on YouTube by now and listen to the Johns Hopkins professor who preceded me [Narges Bajoghli: Jan 6, 2020] and was allowed to talk by Amy for a good 20, 30 minutes. She laid it down so well. I don't think I've ever heard it in such a succinct package. The bottom line is we started it all in '53, when under Eisenhower and Allen Dulles at the CIA, we overthrew the democratically elected leader of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh. When we did that, we put the Shah into power and for 26 years we ran Iran through the Shah, and they were` our protector in the region. Incidentally, we recognized they were the most powerful nation in the region, regionally. They were the hegemon regionally, if you will, and so we, we hired them to be our hegemon in the region, so we didn't have to commit major force there. Once the Shah was overthrown and pushed out, we/our CIA failed completely to give us any intelligence on it and then they failed completely to tell us which way to act instead of acting to support the Democrats. Yes, the Democrats who overthrew the Shah in Iran and to help them bring themselves to power, we let Khomeini come back in and take over their revolution. And by the time he took the hostages and wouldn't release them, he had consolidated that revolution and we're living with the theocracy that he created as a result of that. Meantime, what's been going on is those Democrats, who are the majority of Iranians, have been trying to get their government back. And many experts will tell you, especially those who've been living in Iran periodically over the last decade, that those Democrats in Iran were coming as close as ever to unseating this theocracy themselves until we struck Soleimani. Now we have given the government and the

people of Iran another more intense reason to hate us. And so, they have solidified around this. And I will tell you right now, I think anything Iran does in response to Soleimani's death will be supported by 70, 80% of the Iranian people. We've turned a situation that might have been fixing itself in its own good time and in the way that it should fix itself, that is the people of Iran determine who is going to govern them, not the United States. And made it a situation where that has changed dramatically. And now we may be headed to war because we'll interpret what Iran does now as a result of the killing of Soleimani; we'll interpret it as escalatory to the maximum and the next thing will be a bombing campaign and then all bets are off then because we saw the eight years of brutal war between Iraq and Iran and we were supporting Iraq most of the time during that war. We even shot down an Iranian Airbus with some 200 plus innocent Iranian civilians on it. We saw how resilient and ultimately victorious Iran could be in such a long bloody World War 1-like struggle. So, we're going to bring that now with a much improved Iranian military capability. We're going to bring that on our GIs, on our boys and girls. This is insanity Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Well, it's as if we don't think the Iranians have long memories about our aggressions and our installations of the dictator Shah, again against the popularly elected prime minister.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Much longer memories than us. You go into Iran, you go out in a field, you asked any Iranian, ask a farmer, ask him if he remembers Mossadegh. He'll tell you. what happened in 1953. Go to Illinois, go to California, go to North Dakota, go to Texas ask any Americans, do you know who Mohammad Mossadegh was? Who? They have a long, long memory in Iran.

Ralph Nader: Larry, let's put on the record Hillary's war in Libya. Why don't you explain that and the disastrous consequences under the Obama Administration against the advice of Secretary of State Gates.

Lawrence Wilkerson: I think we had a case there that prompted, more than any other case, what Obama said to me in the Roosevelt Room that day--that there's a bias in Washington towards war. It was a combination with my seminars at William and Mary on this have done a number of case studies on this. It was a combination of Samantha Power and her messianic humanitarianism. That's what we call it. Oh, there's a genocide about to occur, Mr. President; you must intervene. It was a look back on Rwanda and the United States having done under Bill Clinton having done nothing in Rwanda. It was Susan Rice kind of pushing the same sort of thing, but more than anything else, it was the blob. It was the war machine in Washington that said to president Obama, "well, you can do this. You can do it on the cheap--blood and treasure--and you can do it fast. All you have to do is go to the UN Security Council and get a Resolution and then eh, even though that resolution didn't quite say you should do what you eventually did, you'll have the British, maybe some others on your side. Once you're in the air and you're dropping bombs and you're killing people, you can consolidate the thing and it's ultimately the most impolitic diplomatic remark ever made in the world, until Trump started talking about bombing cultural sites, was Hillary Clinton's when she said "we came, we saw and he died" referring to Muammar Gaddafi. Ultimately we unleashed the dogs of war on Libya and left. And now look what's happening. We even have a situation in Tripoli now where the legitimate

government, the government recognized by the UN has one power on its side and the general marching on him on Tripoli has another government on his side--Russia and Turkey, with Turkey, Erdogan having promised to send troops to actually help the established government defend itself against the Russian-backed General Haftar. So we turned Libya into a basket case with our intervention. I think Obama realized that; even in 2015 he realized that, and so you know, he was feeling some great angst about having done that.

Ralph Nader: But Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State was the protagonist, mercilessly.

Lawrence Wilkerson: Yes. Oh, absolutely.

Ralph Nader: Has she ever admitted error?

Lawrence Wilkerson: Nope. Nope. She was as big a warmonger as anyone we have in the United States government today. She was just more clever about it.

Ralph Nader: So, she got Obama to make war to overthrow the dictator of Libya who was already disarming, according to Western standards, and was cutting deals with oil companies. And this was done without a declaration of war, without a congressional authorization, without a congressional appropriation. They found the money in the defense budget. And so while we're complaining about Trump being an outlaw, this was the most egregious exercise of presidential outlawry in American history.

Lawrence Wilkerson: I'm telling you, Ralph, the problem that I just described to you that Obama tried to describe to us in the Roosevelt Room is the blob, the national security state, the inclination to war, the American empire today. Why have we been at war for 19 plus years? The American Empire's raison d'être - its reason for being - is to make war! Why? Because the CEOs of Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Grumman are rolling in money. It's because Exxon Mobil and Chevron are rolling in money. DoD is the largest consumer of fossil fuels in America. If it were a country, it would be 55th in the 200 some odd countries in the world sitting right there on the list beside Portugal. It is so profitable for this empire to wage war that no president can escape waging war.

Ralph Nader: Larry, you teach at William and Mary, which is an old college in Virginia and you speak at various college campuses. Do you see any affirmant among students the way they mobilized for civil rights and against the Vietnam war years ago?

Lawrence Wilkerson: I do see a major change and I've seen it. I've been teaching now for 15 years on the two universities really George Washington for about six along with William and Mary, for about 15. And I've seen a marked change and the young people coming before me in my seminars and so forth and today what I would say mobilizes them most, makes them think the hardest, makes them worry the most, makes them consider the future the most profoundly is 1) climate change and 2) this business that they have never been in the country not at war. They were born after 9/11; they have never lived in a country not at war. They want it to stop and one of the things they will tell you is that when they get into power it will stop!

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. We will link to his work@ralphnaderradiohour.com. I want to thank both our guests again, Judge Andrew Napolitano and again Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap Up. We've got some great extra stuff with both of our guests.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we speak with Sarah Bloom Raskin about the Federal Reserve. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody and remember stay alert, you count and focus on your senators and representatives in the tumultuous times ahead.

[Audio Ends]

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