



## **Retired US Army Colonel on the use of Western weapons against Russian targets and Israel's war in Gaza**

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you for tuning in today, and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. Today I'll be talking to Lawrence Wilkerson about Israel's war in Gaza, as well as the war in Ukraine. Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired army colonel who served in the US Army for 31 years. His last position in the US government was as Chief of Staff for then Secretary of State Colin Powell, from 2000 to 2005. He's now a senior fellow at the Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Lawrence, welcome back to the show.

**Lawrence Wilkerson (LW):** Good to be with you, Zain.

**ZR:** I would like to start this interview with the war in Ukraine. Let me briefly summarize the latest developments for our viewers. In April, the United States approved a \$61 billion military aid package for Ukraine and its war against Russia. One notable difference in this package was the Army Tactical Missile Systems, also known as ATACMS. Previously, the US sent ATACMS with a range of 160km and now ATACMS with a range of 300km will be arriving for the first time, which many military analysts appearing in Western corporate media argue will make a significant difference in favor for the Ukrainian military. At the end of last month, NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg announced during his visit to Ukraine that Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO. French President Emmanuel Macron went even a step further and declared that his country would consider sending ground troops to Ukraine if it ever asked for assistance. In response, Russia announced that it would be holding exercises for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. In addition, the Russians recently launched a summer offensive in Kharkiv and have captured several villages. A few days ago, The New York Times reported on a White House debate in which US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged President Biden to lift restrictions allowing Ukraine to use American weapons to strike targets in Russia. Following this report, many German politicians have also begun to change their stance. Voices in the Social Democrats, SPD, the Greens and the Christian Democrats, CDU, support this initiative and state that Ukraine has the right to defend itself on the basis of international law, but also emphasized that the precondition to pursue this must be in consultation and agreement with the United States. Can you comment

on these developments, in particular, whether you think that allowing Ukraine to attack military installations in Russia, which Russia is using to advance its offensive, would make a significant difference in favor for Ukraine?

**LW:** That's a lot to unpack. Let me start with the most important part of it. Britain also sent long range missiles. Those missiles are a threat to Putin that really should not exist. And as a matter of fact, those missiles represent in a small way, but a very alarming way, the very reason, I think one of the big reasons Putin invaded Ukraine in the first place, was because we were threatening to put ballistic missile launchers in Ukraine within range of Moscow. And that was a no no for him. So this is a very dangerous move. And let me just remark, too, while I'm at it, that it was extremely, extremely dangerous for Ukraine to authorize and then conduct the operation against the early warning system for nuclear weapons for Russia. Those systems were designed for one thing. There's no way they could influence the battlefield in Ukraine. They were designed to detect over the horizon missile shots from the United States of America at Russia. So to take those out is like blinding them in that sector. That's very dangerous. That would be a *casus belli*, if you will, for firing nuclear weapons back at the United States. So this is extremely dangerous, but it's also dangerous from the point of view that you are escalating the war even if you're not shooting at Russia's strategic missile warning devices; you're escalating the war. And more to the point, you're doing it stupidly and unwisely because maybe you're going to kill some Russian citizens. Maybe you're going to kill some civilians trying to get them angry with the war. All you got to do is what bombing and missiles and things like that have done throughout warfare. They have made the people more angry. So you're going to solidify the Russian people even more so on Putin's tactics and strategy. It's very stupid. And as far as Macron goes, the latter day General de Gaulle, which he seems to think he is, he's no General de Gaulle. He needs to go back to his cave. And as far as the German chancellor is concerned, if elections were held tomorrow morning, he couldn't make dogcatcher. His polls are so low and the German people are sick of him and probably wondering at night, you know, when they're thinking about it, what the hell is wrong with Germany? So that's just unpacking a little of what you said. Most important points are, that this is really stupid and unwise. [00:05:07][158.8]

**ZR:** But don't you think Ukraine has a right to defend itself? I mean, Russia is attacking from within its territories, to make sure that it's offensive goes well. So does Ukraine. Do you think, based on international law, they have a right to target those military installations in Russia that Russia is using to advance its offensive?

**LW:** Put this aside for a moment, the tactical questions which you're asking, operational maybe, the strategic question is, as a very erudite German General Harald Kujat, says in an almost hourlong disquisition – it's available on YouTube, I recommend to everyone in my country that they watch it – you're dealing with something very different than operational and tactical measures and results. You're dealing with the possibility of a strategic war between Moscow and Washington. Which I'm becoming more and more to believe, the US Congress and maybe even the president of the United States and his lackeys like Sullivan and Blinken, really want. That's why they are doing what they're doing in Ukraine. They want to eliminate

Russia from the equation and then take China on. As the Luftwaffe General, too; quotes Clausewitz, Alexander the Great. This man is no dummy. And he talks about how this is the worst possible strategy the Empire could have; to take Russia out first and then take China out, once you've gotten Russia gone and the EU on your side collectively, then you go after China. I think he's right. I listened to him twice. It's a very long speech, but I listened to him twice. And it has to be translated, of course, because I don't speak fluent German. But the translator does a really good job. And he's right. He's right. This is the unwise, absolutely insane strategy that the United States under the influence of some very powerful neoconservatives is trying to execute right now through Ukraine. And they're killing young Ukrainians, trying to get Russia to the point where it's so weak that they can then unite with Europe and go after China. This doesn't make any sense, except, as he explained it. It explains a lot of the stupidity and unwise decisions that have been made lately. Not just about making money, though, that's a huge part of Ukraine, too. We're making billions for defense contractors in Europe and in the United States, particularly in Britain. Britain is so much the United States's poodle now that I want to go get some dog food for Rishi Sunak. It's a very dangerous strategy. And it really, if you think about it for a moment, has driven China and Moscow together. Very much so driven them together. I wouldn't have thought – I'm an old China hand – I spent my whole military career focused more or less on China, unusual for an army officer. I never served in Europe. I served in the Pacific every time I was overseas, and I would never have thought this could happen. I would never have thought I would see a Chinese premier shaking hands with a Russian leader in the way that Xi and Putin did recently. We've made this. We have caused this to happen. This is a terrible strategy.

**ZR:** In the midst of all of this escalation, there have been calls for peace. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed a peace band without any preconditions and a ceasefire in which the current territories will be frozen, as they currently are. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has not only rejected this proposal but is preparing a piece band by himself. Ukraine is planning an international peace conference in Switzerland in mid-June, in which it intends to invite 160 delegations from all over the world to draw up and propose a peace plan. Its proposal stipulates the most core elements of it are the following conditions for Russia: Return of all conquered territories, reparations for war damages and establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian war crimes. How do you assess the peace plan proposed by Russia and Ukraine?

**LW:** The first thing I would say is I'd be all for proposing a war crimes tribunal to prosecute Russia for war crimes as long as we did first Israel – first and foremost, do Israel. We're the biggest hypocrites on the face of the earth and our hypocrisy knows no bounds. I think President Lula summed it up: I'm not going. Russia's not going to be there. I'm not going. So did I think of South Africa's president. Others, too, will probably go the same route. BRIC countries in particular. I'm not going. Why would you want to go to a conference on Ukraine when 50% of the antagonist is not there?! When Russia is not there. And I listened to Putin's last three press conferences or two press conferences and one just short of a talk. You're right, what he's doing is he's going back with amendments on the ground because Russia has taken some territory now. He's going back to what was initiated by Zelensky and approved by

Zelensky until Boris Johnson brought the No from Washington into it and stopped it. We could have had the war ended right there, a ceasefire and a peace agreement right there. No. So now we're at a point where Putin has facts on the ground, as it were. So he's saying, I'll do the same thing I did there, only I've invested in this territory and I've invested it with the lives of my soldiers, I'm going to keep this. And oh, by the way, if you hesitate any, I'm probably going to take Odessa and maybe bar you from the Black Sea coast. And I won't surrender to that either. Just like I won't surrender Crimea. This is insanity again, Zain. We don't need to be holding meetings in Switzerland to talk about Ukraine without the principal antagonists on the other side. And Putin is saying, he said it again and again, he does not want territory. I go back to that Luftwaffe general. He is spot on when he talks about what Putin's objectives are, what they've always been, and why we ought to listen to him and sit down and first have a ceasefire, across the board ceasefire, and then a peace agreement. We can then go on to China, if we need to, Europe and the United States. But I fear that this Ukraine conflict is not only going to make that impossible, it's also going to disassemble the EU, it's going to take NATO apart, and we're going to be facing China all by ourselves with a lot of people watching from the sidelines. I read a report yesterday about China's naval strength and its growth in the last decade. Very accurate report, I think, because I trust the people who put it together. It's awesome. It's absolutely awesome. The very idea that we would sail into the South China Sea, for example, quote, "to defend Taiwan", unquote, is ludicrous. Absolutely ludicrous. We get destroyed. So that's where we are now. And let me tell you something about our army, too. Our army has been two years short recruiting. It cannot find enough people. It is actually asking Congress to reduce its in-strength legally. So it won't be so embarrassed at the end of the year. Our reserve component, the heart of our ability to mobilize, is 33% short. It is not ready in any of the measurements of readiness, personnel, equipment, training. It couldn't go to war if it tried. And here we are doing these things that I've just briefly described to you in terms of our strategy. And we have nothing. We have nothing. We'd be destroyed by China if we went in to defend Taiwan.

**ZR:** Back and forth we are seeing that Western politicians, especially in the United States and Germany, are initially against sending a certain type of weapon, whether it's a tank, air fighter jet or some sort of missile and then as time passes along, they approve it and send it. And we are seeing no significant changes in Ukraine's ability to take back territory and let alone defend the territories that it's been holding. In your view, is this strategy of always escalating a better weapon system a way that Ukraine can win back its territory? Or do you think the United States and NATO generally will be drawn in at the conflict at some point?

**LW:** Ukraine has been majorly bled of people. That's its major need and its major challenge. It has no people to speak of compared to the people that Russia has. Now, Putin doesn't want to hold another draft. I'm sure. That's difficult for him. But he has plenty of people right now under arms and they are seasoned. They are well trained now, trained on the battlefield, if you will. But they got lots of training before they came on to that battlefield, too. Unlike the Ukrainians in many respects today. I'm told the population of Ukraine, starting out somewhere between 37 and 40 million or so, is now down to around 20 million. That's from refugees, that's from deaths, that's from wounds, that's from all manner of different reasons.

But Ukraine has been bled by about 40% of its population by this conflict, not a least of which in their own counter-offensive, which failed spectacularly. That's their major need, is people, not these modern weapons systems and everything, which just give the Ukrainians a chance to be way above their weight, if you will, and start something that escalates really rapidly, like shooting these early warning devices. So it doesn't make any sense anymore to keep bleeding Ukraine. And I wish Zelensky would see this and make his own overtures to Washington and say, Look, guys, I've got to make a deal. I don't care what you're trying to do vis a vis China. I don't care what you're trying to do to bleed Russia. I do not care anymore. I care about my people. I care about all those who've died, all those who are wounded, and all those who might die or be wounded. I'm out of this. If you don't want to back me, I'm going in with Vladimir Putin on my own. I mean, that would be the smart move to threaten Washington and get his country back, such as it is, and work on keeping that portion of it, neutral with no entry into NATO, no entry into the EU, like Georgia is looking at right now, until maybe ten or 15 or 20 years has passed, and I'd get the EU to pay a lot of money to help fix me back up again. You could be a smart leader. You could reverse the situation. And Zelensky is not stupid, but I fear his fear of Washington, abandoning him completely, is so stark that he won't do this. But if he wants to be, if he wants to have a place in Ukraine's history, then that's what he needs to do. Save Ukraine.

**ZR:** Let me switch gears here and move to the Israel-Palestine issue in relation to what's happening with international institutions. Last week, the International Criminal Court's, ICC, chief prosecutor Karim Khan announced that he would seek arrest warrants for the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister, Yoav Gallant, as well as three senior Hamas officials, that includes its leader, head of military wing and others. These applications for arrest warrants are based on war crimes and crimes against humanity that these entities have committed. In addition, the International Court of Justice, ICJ, ruled last week by 13 votes to two that Israel should immediately halt its military offensive in Rafah and should not take any actions that may endanger and harm Palestinian life in whole or in part. Despite this, order Israel is continuously striking Rafah and most recently conducted airstrike at a refugee camp, leaving 45 civilians dead and at least 249 people severely wounded, drawing international criticism, including from the European Union. Despite the fact that Israel admitted that it was a tragic mistake and stated that it will conduct an internal investigation, it has neither announced any reparations for the victims nor pursue any criminal charges against those responsible. Can you provide an assessment on these developments, in particular, how Israel is approaching international institutions such as the ICC and ICJ?

**LW:** [00:18:09] To me, Israel climbing under any leadership, but certainly under this leadership of Likud in the right wing, that it is going to do an investigation is a farce. I went through the Rachel Corrie ordeal as Chief of Staff of the US Department of State. I know how they lie, they cheat, they steal, they never do any investigation that is favorable to anybody but Israel. And that's the way this will turn out to. I watched John Kirby, Admiral Kirby, I can hardly stand to watch him anymore. He's so obsequious. He's so apologetic for the killing that's going on in Israel, but nothing is being done about it. I'm sure he's just

echoing Blinken and Sullivan and Biden, but nonetheless, he nauseates me. He almost came to tears. I'm sure that those were fake tears over this attack on the tent city. But the reporters were relentless. They would not let him get away. They kept pounding him, pounding him. And that's what they should be doing. They should have been doing it all along because we, the United States of America, are utterly complicit in this horrible killing, this massacre taking place in Gaza. We are behind it. We are as guilty as Netanyahu and Smotrich and Ben-Gvir and all the rest of those devils in Israeli clothing. It's terrible. On the same token, the IDF is being handed casualty after casualty now, because they have to go back into the rubble of the North, rubble they made and rubble that is very conducive to guerrilla fighters and fight them again. Because Netanyahu's strategic objective of destroying Hamas was ridiculous, totally ridiculous. And they're finding that out in the death of Israeli and wounding of Israeli soldiers. This is a mess, a total mess to include the pier that failed. There wasn't delivering much food anyway because the IDF wasn't securing the food convoys. Once the World Food Program got them off the dock and out into the countryside. Disaster. And the United States is in for a penny, in for a pound, in for a ton in this disaster. And if Joe Biden doesn't say something very soon, Joe Biden is not going to be reelected president of the United States. There are just too many people in this country. They realize because of media like yours in part, that this is the fact. This is the truth. These events are happening and we're condoning them. And furthermore, we're not doing anything to reject them. Now, the International Court of Justice has been around for a while. It was the permanent ICJ during the League of Nations, and we just continued it. It deals with states. Every single state under the United Nations is subject to its rulings. It deals with states. So Bibi Netanyahu and everybody else saying they have no authority, that's poppycock. They have no authority because, Bibi, you operate outside the law. You always operate outside the law. The International Criminal Court, of course, is part of the Rome Statute. And guess who are signatories to that? Six or seven states. Stellar states like the former Libya, like Israel and like America. So they can't really do anything with respect to states that aren't signatories to the Rome Statute. However, they have shown the willingness in the past with Black leaders, they've shown the willingness with leaders from the Balkans, like Radovan Karadzic and Slobodan Milosevic, to go a little step further and actually get these people and bring them in. I think both of them died before they could reach any verdict. But the court has shown a lot of courage here in the way they've done this, the balanced way they've done it. Hamas and Israel. And in the way they are not backing down. And I would love to see the United States, the power since World War two, in particular, but also since our Civil war, the Geneva Conventions and the third one on prisoners of war grew out of our civil war, we've been the staunch advocate. We've been the foremost advocate for these laws of land warfare in such that Geneva and other things represent the ICC, the ICJ, and now we're their biggest enemy. Isn't that a turn of heart, a turn of phrase? What we're seeing is how hypocrites we are. Go after Charles Taylor, go after Radovan Karadzic, go after Slobodan Milosevic, whom we don't like, and we're willing to back you on. Okay. Good deal. Go after somebody who's our ally, no matter how much a murderer he is?! We don't like that. I've even been told that Congress members have called prosecutors at the ICC and threaten them. Can you imagine that? I know what I'd say if I were the prosecutor.

**ZR:** You touched on this hypocrisy, I would like to dig a little more deeper in the way the West responds to different cases brought forward by the International Criminal Court, ICC. When the ICC, for example, issued an arrest warrant against Russia, in particular against Russian President Vladimir Putin on March 17th, 2023, the US and UK in particular supported it and even urged all ICC members to enforce it. In fact, US President Biden in July of 2023 even ordered his administration to begin sharing evidence of alleged Russian war crimes in Ukraine with the ICC, which implicitly, one can argue, recognized the court's jurisdiction even though the United States is not a signatory to it. In the case of Israel, however, Joe Biden described the application arrest warrants as, quote, "shameful", unquote. Germany, although recognizing the court's decision as well as its independence, criticized the arrest warrants on the basis that it creates a false equivalence between Hamas leaders and Israeli officials. Can you talk about why the West, in particular, the United States treats ICC cases differently and what this may reveal?

**LW:** First, let me just comment on what you said. The Russians have not killed anywhere near the number of women and children in Ukraine that Israel has killed in that tiny little enclave of Gaza. I think the numbers are probably going to shock us even more than we're shocked now when they come out and are revealed, when the rubble is removed and all the bodies are found and so forth. But needless to say, what's happening in Gaza as bad as what's happening in Ukraine is, is not the equivalent of Ukraine. And yet, as you pointed out, we're cheerleading going after Vladimir Putin and we're saying, Oh, not the case, with regard to Israel. This is rampant hypocrisy, and we lead the world in that today. If you look at what might happen with regard to Ukraine, and you look at what might happen with regard to Gaza, both happenings generated, at least in one case, by the ineptitude of the United States and the other case by the complicity of the United States, there is no comparison. There's no comparison. And the court has been very, very specific in what it said and done. I was in Paris in January of 2019 with the Germans and the French, talking with terrorists – haha, terrorists – who'd been in Guantanamo Bay, in our prison camps. They weren't guilty of anything except being swept up on the battlefield. But we talked with them, and we talked with the German jurist, and we talked with the French jurist, who were looking at the cases as we interviewed these "terrorists", quote, unquote. Well, on the third day of our get together, a young prosecutor from the ICC showed up. And so we arranged a briefing from her to us because we knew she was working on a case in Afghanistan, a case that might generate itself against the United States government, NATO, the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban in terms of war crimes. She briefed us on the first phase of that case, which is the phase where they don't have to go by such rigorous rules of evidence and so forth. If they get through that and make a recommendation for a bigger investigation under all the rules, then they've succeeded. And she was very powerful in her presentation, and she thought that they were going to succeed in getting the court to go on to a formal investigation. And they did. And they have found that war crimes were committed by all those entities in Afghanistan. Do you think anybody's ever going to be held accountable for that? No. Is anybody going to be held accountable other than Netanyahu – I assure you, he will, eventually – for Gaza or for Ukraine? Probably not. In Sicily some years ago, the late Sir Nigel Rodley, who is the UN special rapporteur for torture 1993 to 2001 or so. A really tough job, and he'd done a lot of

other things too. He was an international lawyer of repute, to say the least. I asked him in a restaurant one night in Siracusa, Sicily, because I was so frustrated about what we were talking about at that time, about Guantanamo, I said: "Are we doing any good?" Are you and people like you, and Cherif Bassiouni and others who were international jurists? Are we doing any good?" And he said: "We bothered the buggers". That's it. That's what international law does. It bothers them. And I hope this bothers Joe Biden straight to his grave.

**ZR:** To my last question and we only have a few minutes left. Whenever the US sets a red line, for example, when it did in Rafah, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says we will go, by ourselves – I'm paraphrasing here – with or without the United States. What actually needs to be done is that when the United States sets a red line, what policy should the US follow that Israel starts complying with humanitarian and international law?

**LW:** It's really quite simple. It's so simple it hurts. Joe Biden picks up the phone, calls Netanyahu, and he says, you will not get a single bullet, a single bomb, a drop of fuel, I will close the war reserve stockage in Israel to you. I will put guards on the gate. You will not be able to get in. If you do, we will shoot the people trying to come in. I will do everything in my power as president of the United States to stop you from this war. And you know, if I do it, you will have to stop. That's the kind of courage it would take to do it. But Biden didn't have that kind of courage. He doesn't have that kind of courage. He's wrestling right now with the prospects of losing. Losing. Trump's ahead in some key states, even though he's going to court every freaking day almost. But he's ahead in key states. The only place the Democrats are doing fairly well is maybe in the Senate, although that remains to be seen, too. Guys like Rick Scott in Florida, a stupid idiot anyway, may be vulnerable to the Democratic change of seat, but Biden himself is not going to be reelected if he continues on the present course, because there are so many Democrats and others who might vote for him. Independents. A whole score of independent women and such, who are not going to go to the ballot box. They're going to they're not even going to go and hold their nose and vote for Joe. They're not going to vote. Period. He's going to lose.

**ZR:** Lawrence Wilkerson, retired Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. Thank you so much for your time today.

**LW:** Thanks for giving me the opportunity.

**ZR:** And thank you for tuning in today. If you've watched this video and made it this far, please just take a few more minutes to support us with a standing order via Patreon PayPal, BetterPlace or directly to our bank account. We are an independent and nonprofit media organization that does not take any money from corporations and governments. We don't even allow advertisements, all with the goal to uphold our principle of staying independent and providing you with critical journalism that you just won't hear from the mainstream media. We have 148,000 subscribers, but only 500 people support us with a standing order on a monthly basis. If all of our 148,000 people, or even half of that number, would support us with a standing order of just 2 to \$3 or € a month, we would be able to cover all of our costs associated with our independent journalism for the next four to five years. I thank you for



tuning in and for your support, I'm your host, Zain Rasa. See you next time.

**END**

---

**Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:**

<b>BANKKONTO:</b>	<b>PAYPAL:</b>	<b>PATREON:</b>	<b>BETTERPLACE:</b>
Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.	E-Mail: <a href="mailto:PayPal@acTVism.org">PayPal@acTVism.org</a>	<a href="https://www.patreon.com/acTVism">https://www.patreon.com/acTVism</a>	Link: <a href="#">Click here</a>
Bank: GLS Bank			
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600			
BIC: GENODEM1GLS			

The acTVism Munich e.V. association is a non-profit organization with legal capacity. The association pursues exclusively and directly non-profit and charitable purposes. Donations from Germany are tax-deductible. If you require a donation receipt, please send us an e-mail to: [info@acTVism.org](mailto:info@acTVism.org)