

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson Calls Out Trump's Lies on Iran



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By Amy Goodman & Denis Moynihan

President Donald Trump brought the United States to the brink of war with Iran by ordering the assassination of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the second most powerful figure in Iran. After Soleimani and four others were killed in a U.S. drone strike at Baghdad International Airport Friday, Trump, offering no evidence, alleged that Soleimani was orchestrating imminent attacks on American personnel. We should be skeptical when Trump, or any leader, invokes secret "intelligence" to justify their violent actions. Perhaps no one knows this better than Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, who served as Secretary of State Colin Powell's chief of staff from 2002 to 2005. He witnessed, and participated in, the effort by President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and others to promote lies to justify the disastrous, illegal invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"That effort led to a war of choice with Iraq — one that resulted in catastrophic losses for the region and the United States-led coalition, and that destabilized the entire Middle East," Wilkerson wrote in a New

York Times editorial in 2018 titled, "I Helped Sell the False Choice of War Once. It's Happening Again." Wilkerson continued, "the Trump administration is using much the same playbook to create a false impression that war is the only way to address the threats posed by Iran. This war with Iran ... would be 10 to 15 times worse than the Iraq war in terms of casualties and costs."

Back in 2003, Col. Wilkerson helped Powell prepare his infamous Feb. 5, 2003, speech before the United Nations Security Council. "My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources," Powell said. "These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence." His presentation included numerous slides, audio clips and a sample vial, purportedly containing anthrax, which Powell gingerly held aloft for the cameras. The speech lasted over two hours and, it turns out, was riddled with lies and fabrications. Powell would later describe his performance as a permanent "blot" on his record. But it did the job. Six weeks later, "shock and awe" began: The Bush/Cheney administration indiscriminately bombed Iraq.

"All across the region, the chaos that we're looking at was produced by the United States invasion in 2003," Wilkerson observed on the "Democracy Now!" news hour this week. "I watched as the intelligence was cooked, as principals in the George W. Bush government were sold by that intelligence or helped to warp that intelligence, as was the case with Dick Cheney, and I watched the inevitable march to war."

Among the similarities that Wilkerson sees between the lies that led to war in 2003 and today are Trump surrogates appearing on TV or, now, Twitter, lying to the public. Vice President Mike Pence tweeted after the assassination that Soleimani "assisted in the clandestine travel to Afghanistan of 10 of the 12 terrorists who carried out the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States."

"Pence's words are laughable," Wilkerson said on "Democracy Now!" "Soleimani and his entourage were actually helping us in Afghanistan in 2001, early 2002, to fight the Taliban. We got indispensable help from Iran in that regard."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been one of the most vocal and omnipresent defenders of Trump's assassination of Soleimani. "We are going to lie, cheat and steal, as Pompeo is doing right now, as Trump, [Defense Secretary] Esper, Lindsey Graham [and] Tom Cotton [are] doing right now, and a host of other members of my political party, the Republicans, are doing right now ... to continue this war complex," Wilkerson said. "That's the truth of it. And that's the agony of it."

Col. Wilkerson is not the only Republican critical of Trump's actions. Utah Republican Sen. Mike Lee spoke to the press Wednesday, reacting to what he said was "probably the worst briefing I've seen, at least on a military issue." He called the briefing "absolutely insane," and described how the briefers discouraged a debate on Iran in Congress: "I don't care whether they're with the CIA, with the Department of Defense or otherwise to come in and tell us that we can't debate and discuss the appropriateness of military intervention against Iran. It's un-American, it's unconstitutional and it's wrong."

Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, who has witnessed the war-makers behind closed doors, firsthand, is not optimistic about the prospects for peace: "Ever since 9/11, the beast of the national security state, the beast of endless wars, the beast of the alligator that came out of the swamp, for example, and bit Donald Trump just a few days ago, is alive and well," he concluded on "Democracy Now!" "America exists today to make war."

Taken from Democracy Now

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