

Ralph Nader Radio Hour

Episode 503

“A Strategy of Annihilation”

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. Good to have you back, David.

David Feldman: Thank you, good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody. We're going to hear from retired Colonel Larry Wilkerson.

Steve Skrovan: As the hostilities between Israel and Gaza enter their third week, we enter our third week of coverage. Over the past two weeks, we've spoken with Israeli journalist Gideon Levy and Middle East researcher James Zogby. Today, we're addressing a question that keeps coming up. Was there any military purpose to the Israeli response to Hamas' attack? Our first guest today, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, can speak to these questions with some authority. We're hoping Colonel Wilkerson can shed a little more light on exactly what happened on October 7th, how the attack unfolded, and why it met so little military resistance, how much on either side the Hamas' attack and the lack of Israeli resistance was intentional, and how much could just be chalked up to incompetence. And does it matter? After we speak to Colonel Wilkerson, we'll be joined once again by our resident constitutional scholar, Bruce Fein, who will give us some legal perspective on the international side. As always, somewhere in the middle, we'll check in with our staunch corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber. But first, let's approach the Israeli-Gazan conflict from a military perspective. David?

David Feldman: Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired U.S. Army Colonel and former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell. Colonel Wilkerson served as Deputy Director and Director of the U.S. Marine Corps War College at Quantico, Virginia, and for 15 years, he was the distinguished visiting professor of government and public policy at the College of William & Mary. He is currently a senior fellow at the Eisenhower Media Network, senior advisor to the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, and co-founder of the All-Volunteer Force Forum. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Thank you, good to be with you.

Ralph Nader: Welcome indeed, Larry. You've been on the inside on the run-up to the Iraq War under George W. Bush and Dick Cheney; you were Chief of Staff for Colin Powell at the State Department. Give us your current view of what do you think is going to happen now and going back to October 7th.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I paint the picture this way, picture this, if you will. You have the richest nation in the world on a per capita basis with more per capita basis billionaires than

we have, Israel, backed by the richest nation in the world, heavily in debt, but still, asset-wise, the richest nation in the world, going against the most oppressed, repressed, poor people in the world, Palestinians and Gaza. What's wrong with that picture?

Ralph Nader: That raises the question that Biden doesn't seem to distinguish between the subjugators and the subjugated and the colonizers of what remains of Palestinian land, 22% of the original Palestine, taking land and water and all kinds of checkpoints and blowing up houses. Factually, it's pretty clear that the difference in military superpower on the side of the Israelis in the U.S. compared to the feeble weaponry of the Palestinians, if they're even able to acquire them, is probably the greatest gap in modern history between the occupier and the occupied. Why doesn't Biden recognize that? He's supposed to be a foreign policy expert. He has been to Afghanistan many times and Iraq and Ukraine. Why doesn't he recognize those basic facts, which unrecognized are going lead to a massive slaughter larded with genocidal orders by the Israeli Defense Minister when he said no water, no food, no electricity, no gas, which are the words of annihilation and extermination.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: They've reined him in a little bit. I was quoting him at Temple Emanuel up in New York City a couple of nights ago at Rabbi Bob Widom's congregation, and there were some stunned people in the audience when I quoted him and several IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] generals. They have reigned them in a little bit - not a lot - but a little bit. I compare the situation roughly to when Grant finally gave Sheridan, Commander of the Army in the West, and Sherman, his Secretary of War, permission to go into the Black Hills for gold and to annihilate the Indians, the Native Americans. Only that was 175 plus years ago. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, heinous though that was, and we've had the Geneva Conventions. We've had all manner of humanitarian law and humanitarian justice, courts to enforce it, and international courts, regional tribunals, and everything else. So, this is not quite the same thing, although the crime level is about the same, and the fact that the United States is allied with it is unconscionable. Secondly, I listened in in my hotel room in New York City to Biden's Oval Office address. I listened twice, and I took notes, and at the end of it, one CNN commentator got it right, but they quickly cut him off. What Biden was saying to Americans, *there's chaos in America. I want to use the war in Ukraine and the war in the Middle East to unify this country (and get reelected)*. That, to me, was one of the most despicable presidential addresses I have ever had the misfortune to hear.

Ralph Nader: The listeners need to know Netanyahu's support of Hamas in the past. Hamas was a small religious organization in the 1980s, and the U.S. and Israel supported it, expanded it, and funded it as a counterweight to the secular Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). But there's more to it recently. The *New York Times* on October 24th quotes Netanyahu in 2019. This is pretty astonishing. The quote in the *Times* is, "In 2019, Mr. Netanyahu told a meeting of his center-right Likud party, and this is the quote by Netanyahu, "Those who want to thwart the possibility of a Palestinian state should support the strengthening of Hamas and the transfer of money to Hamas. This is part of our strategy." That was 2019 by the prime minister then and the prime minister now. So, what's the political intrigue here? What's going on?"

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: It's a little more complicated, I think. I go way back with this before Netanyahu even with Sharon. And what's happening is a Kabuki game where Bibi

entices—he doesn't have to entice very much—the Emir in Doha, not only as he did support the Taliban talks. One wonders why the Taliban were comfortable in Doha, one of the biggest supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, into giving hundreds of millions of dollars to Gaza, which he is ready to do for humanitarian reasons, but also to supply Hamas because Bibi is very strategically allied with Hamas. Hamas does not believe in a two-state solution. They are adamantly opposed to a two-state solution. They want a Palestinian state and Israel gone. But Bibi sympathizes with that because he wants an Israeli state and the Palestinians gone. So he's very much willing to work with Hamas, not explicitly, but certainly tacitly and implicitly, to undermine Mahmoud Abbas, not hard to do, he's so corrupt, and the Palestinian authority who do indeed want a two-state solution. So, Bibi's been enmeshed in this for a long time in Sharon before him, ever since George W. Bush told Ari Sharon in the Oval Office, in either 2003 or 2004, *over to you, Prime Minister. Everything for the last 40 to 50 years has failed, so we're not going to do it anymore. Put the roadmap away, put two states away, put the peace solution away. It's over to you, you do whatever you want to do. (meaning: kill anybody you want to kill, anytime you want to kill), and we'll support you.*

Ralph Nader: There seems to be an Israeli government strategy that goes beyond revenge for the massacre on October 7th. The *New York Times* reports over 115 health facilities have been devastated, hospitals and clinics so far. So, they've already achieved revenge, but they're going further. They're pushing the population to the south, maybe trying to push into Sinai. They said to the northern Palestinians, get out of your homes, apartments, hospitals, go south, and then they started bombing the south around Han Yunus, and even bombed the Rafa border crossing into Egypt. So, every place in Gaza is a target—schools, clinics, hospitals, water mains, electric networks, UN installations. They've already killed 35 United Nations staff working for UNRWA, even though the buildings are clearly marked and have been marked for years as UN buildings. And churches, mosques, you name it. So, what is the strategy now beyond revenge? Is it just to clear Gaza of its population and annex it? Push them in the desert?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I don't think Israel has a strategy. Their tactics right now, and that's what I would call them, not strategic, but tactics are to destroy as much as possible in as short a time period as possible. They've elongated it a bit from pressure from the United States, States, other Arab countries, and other countries in Europe. But they're still brutal and they're still just killing people to be killing people. They have no strategy because if you sit and think about it for a moment, you ask yourself some pretty fundamental questions. If you do what you just described as a strategy, who rules Gaza afterwards? Where do these people go? Egypt won't take them. Egypt has threatened to back out of its peace treaty with Israel if they have to take too many of them. Jordan certainly won't take them. They already have more Palestinians in Jordan than they have Bedouins [nomadic Arab tribe]. So, nobody's going to take them. And living in the Sinai is not a solution. So, who's going to govern and where are they going to live? They have not thought this out at all; they've just thought the brutality out. And they are busy executing that, somewhat attenuated by the fact that others are telling them *don't be so brutal*, or they'll lose the strategic picture to Hamas rather than winning it. And that's exactly what they're going to do if they keep on the same track. They'll lose the strategic picture. They'll destroy every relationship they had or were building with the Arab countries. And they'll wind up with a problem they can't do anything about except repeat it endlessly, ad nauseum. Maybe that's what Ben Gvir and the crowd that runs with him, and Netanyahu now because he accepted them into

his government, maybe that's what they want. They were conducting pogroms in the West Bank with the settlers helping. Every day they would do something that would get a few Palestinians brutally killed in the West Bank. They're doing the same thing in East Jerusalem. So, I have no idea. Netanyahu's goal here is to stay out of jail. Staying out of jail is his real goal.

Ralph Nader: There's a corruption case against him. But there's also internal politics. He can stifle oppositional dissent. He's already got a unity coalition with the more liberal party. And that's one way he stays in power. But Netanyahu is nothing other than a very shrewd politician. He's been around a long time. In 1976, he addressed a joint session of Congress to huge applause and standing ovation. And nothing was louder than when he said, paraphrasing him *The Israeli economy is really doing very well now. And we're about to stop asking for USAID.* He got a huge standing ovation. And of course, USAID has continued to get bigger.

We're talking with retired Colonel Larry Wilkerson, of long experience in government, chief of staff for Colin Powell. Since he left the military, he's been a strong advocate and networker for peace and justice and end to the U.S. empire. Larry, what is the U.S. strategy here? They've sent two carrier task forces with destroyers to the Eastern Mediterranean. One Navy veteran half-seriously said the other day that they better watch out and be careful about Israeli fighters coming in on them, alluding to the Liberty attack, (the attack on the U.S. Liberty in 1967 by Israel). You want to describe that?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: That was a horrible deed. My students have endlessly parsed over it, gone through the archives and everything else. I have no idea why the Israelis did that, but I have a suspicion that they did it intentionally, that there were no bones about it. They did it because Liberty was a very sophisticated - for the times - intel ship. And she had intercepted communications between the Israeli leadership. Most people don't know this, but in times of war or near war, Israel surrenders the civilian leadership to the military. They don't do like we do. Our president stays in charge throughout whatever conflict we might be in, World War II, Korea, or whatever it is. Our president stays in charge. Not true with Israel; they turn everything over to the generals. And what happened was the generals were talking about some pretty nasty things, that Liberty had intercepted and that was disaster. So [in 1967] the Israelis attacked that [U.S. Navy technical research] ship. Their full intent was to sink it with all-hands-on-deck, board and even machine gun some of the survivors in the water. And we completely covered up that heinous deed. The Navy was forced to cover it up, and the president himself covered it up. I don't think we'll ever know the truth about it. Maybe in a hundred years. But I'm more concerned if there gets to be three (carriers) there. I'll be really concerned because carrier ops cannot go on for more than 24 to 48 hours unless there are three carriers; then they can go on around the clock. If we send three carriers there, we must be very, very concerned about China, Russia, and Iran in terms of the conflict there. But in a bigger sense, that is to say, we're going to teach them a lesson. They can't interfere when we're in our lake, the Mediterranean, with our craft, those aircraft carriers. This bothers me greatly, because we're going to wind up with a carrier or two on the bottom of the ocean with 10,000 casualties in about 10 hours, because these carriers are OK for striking Syria or striking some country that has no real capability to come back. But with China and Russia, they'll sink a carrier or two in a nanosecond. It's that easy.

Ralph Nader: So, what is the strategy right now of Biden and the Blinken Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense Austin? Publicly, they're basically saying we're against the ceasefire and we're against the humanitarian ceasefire. They're urging Israel to "abide by the laws of war," while we're ferociously shipping all kinds of weapons, some of them having nothing to do with this particular conflict. And they're pushing for a \$14 billion-plus aid package through Congress for Israel to have the American taxpayer pay for the Israeli colossal blunders and intelligence and detection failures that rendered them unable to protect their own people on October 7th. This is what it's all about—a tremendous intelligence failure that exposed these civilians in the Kibbutz and other places to the raid.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Let's not forget the role of National Security Agency and the CIA and DIA, because we have a base in Be'er Sheva that is state-of-the-art; we have another base that has adequate intelligence capacity. So, to tell me that Mossad and Shin Bet and the rest of the Israeli intelligence service missed this, is to tell me that the United States working hand-in-glove with them with its very best and highest ranked intelligence entities failed too, no new occurrence of course, but no one is talking about that. What was the base in Be'er Sheva doing? What were the other people doing? Indeed, what were the entities in this country, the CIA and NSA doing that they missed this completely? Are they really that stupid and incompetent?

Ralph Nader: No, it's interesting, this low-tech attack on October 7th basically overtook the high-tech surveillance, the sensors, the detectors, the videos, the informants; it's almost inconceivable. How do you explain that? Were they all asleep at the switch?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Three things contribute to that: arrogance and hubris, lack of imagination and thinking your enemy is subhuman. All three of those apply to Israel and for that matter they apply to the United States too. But I'm looking at it from the perspective of how could you possibly do what the Israelis did unless there was some intent there to aid and abet it? I can't bring myself to conclude that yet, and I don't have the evidence to support that, so I won't. But otherwise, it's a colossal failure, and the only way I can explain it is the way I just did—arrogance and hubris, treating your enemy as if he's subhuman and therefore incapable of anything and the fact you lack imagination. Israelis have lacked imagination for a long time. All they think about in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), for example, is occupation duty. There's another possibility that doesn't obviate the others, but it goes along with them. In 1973, two people talked about the failure in '73 when the Egyptians were able to do all they did initially. And one of them very cogently said, "We knew where every tank in the Egyptian army was 24/7, but we didn't know what the people in the tanks were thinking." That was a very prescient observation. They had no idea what Hamas was thinking; they thought Hamas was thinking about governing. That's the reason they helped Hamas get elected in 2006. And Netanyahu even said this. He too thought Hamas would be busy governing. Well, they were not busy governing. They were busy working out the next Intifada.

Ralph Nader: Here's a question the media hasn't asked - to our knowledge at least. Where did Hamas get these weapons? There's an embargo. The Israeli Navy apprehends any ships coming with weapons to Gaza. They got informants all over Gaza. They don't get these weapons in pieces and put them together into machine guns, etc. Are they getting them as some Israeli journalists suspect from the Israeli underworld?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I can tell you this right now. If you've read Micheal Glenny's book of several years ago, *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld* - they even made a TV series out of it and Israel got it pulled off the air almost instantly. There is such a huge traffic in arms in the world. Over a decade ago, author Misha Glenny estimated the black economy at five trillion dollars. That's a lot of money. Of that five trillion, of course, some of it is illegal trafficking in people. Some of it is drugs and associated illicit activities; some of it is prostitution; some of it is auto theft. But a big portion of it - and the United States is right at the center of this - is moving arms around. My own city, Virginia Beach, is a conduit for arms going out. The National Rifle Association (NRA) had a real problem with its finances recently. and I've had people associated with the NRA, who've subsequently left it because they hate Wayne LaPierre's guts; they insinuated that the NRA, in order to make money, sometimes is in on these less than licit (legal) weapons exchanges, especially those that go over shores. They have told me, *if you're looking for somebody who's in charge of the illicit arms traffic in the world, look internally.*

Ralph Nader: Hamas had some pretty sophisticated technology to pull this off and to defend themselves in the tunnels, etc. Could it be that when Netanyahu told his own Likud Party that "those who want to thwart the possibility of a Palestinian state should support the strengthening of Hamas and the transfer of money to Hamas as this is part of our strategy." Could that money have gone to buy - in the underworld trafficking - the arms that Hamas has acquired?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: You ask, could it? Yes, it could more easily than we might want to think, but I'm not going there because I have no proof of it at all. That would just be shocking to me that we'd wind up contributing to the deaths that happened on October the 7th. I can't go that far.

Ralph Nader: You remember Secretary of State Colin Powell when Bush and Cheney initiated the criminal invasion of Iraq, and you were right there in the State Department. He said *when you invade a country, you own it*, which is another way of him saying, *you've got to protect the civilian population under international law*, and we'll learn more about the international law violations of the U.S. and Israel near the end of this program with Bruce Fein. What is Israel going to do if it invades and occupies? Or because it doesn't want to be responsible for the civilian population fleeing, destitute and dying, they just go in and do their work and then go out and then go in the next day. What do you see here?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Israel has had this strategy for a long time of "mowing the lawn," as they call it, just going in periodically and annihilating everyone. I go back to Operation Cast Lead when an IDF officer told me that his battalion commander said to him as Operation Cast Lead was unfolding, *kill everything that moves, dogs, cats, babies, women, children, kill everything that moves. We are sending a signal this time.* I have no doubt that that was probably an honest revelation by that particular IDF officer. So, what comes after that, though, seems to be something Israel never contemplates very well, or never comes up with a solution. It's hard for me to criticize them because we did the same thing in Iraq and the same thing in Afghanistan, less brutally perhaps. But nonetheless we had no strategy in Iraq nor any strategy in Afghanistan. We just stayed there year after year and mowed the lawn. So, I don't know what Israel's going to

do, but I'm not impressed with post-conflict times in the past. They don't seem to know what they're going to do or who is going to govern.

Ralph Nader: When you were in on the strategy to invade Iraq, and you all were advising Bush in the White House and Cheney. Did you ever talk to him about observing international law, the UN Charter?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: First of all, you didn't advise Cheney, he advised you. Second, Will Taft, our lawyer at State (Department) was very vocal and eloquent in explaining the obligations under the Geneva Conventions for an occupying power and all the ancillary duties that went along with it. But Dick Cheney didn't listen to that sort of thing. Dick Cheney was like Netanyahu. Dick Cheney was all about *let's get it done and get it over* and getting it done was *let's kill the Taliban, let's kill al-Qaeda, let's do whatever we have to do in Iraq to whoever opposes us and get it over with and get out*. And oh, by the way, they wanted to do the same thing to Assad in Syria and the same thing to the Ayatollah and his boys, the RGC in Iran. The only thing that stopped him was Iran did not cooperate. It (Iran) was not a pushover. An insurgency started and they had to hang around, because Bush ordered them to do so. No doubt in my mind that had Bush not ordered them to hang around, Cheney and Rumsfeld would have pushed the forces and made the president conduct the operation they wanted on into Syria and on into Iran.

Ralph Nader: Did anybody tell Bush, for example, *Mr. President, we do have to remind ourselves that when you go into Iraq under Shock and Awe, (the slogan), there are going to be a lot of children, women, innocent men, mothers, fathers, killed and you have to take that into account*. Did you ever put that human element in front of him?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Will Taft did, and so did Powell from time to time. But Madeleine Albright, when she was asked whether she knew that the sanctions kill hundreds if not thousands of Iraqi children and she said, "It was worth it." That's the way we think.

Ralph Nader: Actually, the figure put to her by reporter Leslie Stahl was 500,000 Iraqi children. Well, the overwhelming proportion of human beings in Gaza are children and women; nearly half of the population of Gaza are children.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: The casualties ~~right the casualties~~ that UNICEF is reporting now amongst children are staggering.

Ralph Nader: And this is what I want to ask you. It seems like given 8,000 missiles being used already against the civilian population and so-called military targets in Gaza. It's inconceivable that there are only 6,000 fatalities. I mean, they blew up apartment buildings. Strikes by Israeli missiles killed 60-80 people, crowded marketplaces. Is it possible that Hamas is low-balling the fatality toll because they don't want to appear like they can't begin to protect their own people? People are now dying from contaminated water, disease; there's astronomical fear of a cholera epidemic; there is starvation, lack of medical care for injuries and hospitals, no medicines, etc. Would you be surprised if the total death toll reaches 30-40,000 within a couple months?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Eventually I would be surprised if it didn't go that high because those things you ticked off laterally to the bombs, bullets, and bayonets, kill more people. Usually on the battlefield and post-battlefield the ratio is 10, 11, 12 to 1 casualties from disease, water, the ruination that war causes compared to the combat casualties. So, add at least 10 for every 1 in combat for the disaster that comes in that aftermath.

Ralph Nader: How do you read the citizen temper here if there is one?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: We're perched on a very dangerous post right now. I owe this idea or the conception for it to the Jewish community in New York. There were more Jews in New York than there were in Israel until the Russians immigrated, but there's still a lot of Jews in New York. And most of them detest Netanyahu. And one of them said to me, without blinking an eye, that *the greatest motivator to anti-Semitism in the world is BiBi Netanyahu*. They are very worried. Won't talk much about this. Because they're afraid if they talk about it, they'll bring it to fruition. They're very worried that the American people, who are noted for this sort of thing, will do a volte-face, a change of face at the last minute. We'll wind up having attacks on synagogues all across the country, and anti-Semitism will be rampant.

Let me tell you about the street I was on in Great Neck, New York. The street runs north-south with four synagogues on it. Some are Conservative, some are Liberal, some are Reform. The light was so bright when I came out of the synagogue that you could see like daytime. And I asked the rabbi, "What's this?" He said, "That's the police; they're everywhere." The police are all around the synagogues because they fear. And I suspect they've actually had threats to get that kind of police protection. So, it'll be a huge change, and it'll be almost instantaneous. You'll go to sleep on Monday night, and everything will be okay. And on Tuesday morning, you'll wake up and the majority of the American people would not have any use for the Jews in their midst. That is not a good development. But that's kind of the way we do things in this country these days. In fact, when you look to the past, it's the way we often did things then too. We make decisions based on almost groundless evidence but a groundswell of opinion, and then suddenly it's an entirely different ball game. That's a dangerous situation to be in and of course it extends to Europe and all across the globe. However, what I'm seeing all across the globe, certainly three billion people, maybe more, is an absolute detesting of what we're doing right now, both in Ukraine and in the Middle East. It's growing every day. Hundreds of people are converting to hatred of the Empire. in places like Brazil, Argentina, South Africa and so forth. That's not a good development. It's one we will recognize too late and too little.

Ralph Nader: Well, there's fear on all sides. There's fear by Islamic Americans, by Palestinian Americans. Events are being canceled, like literary events at 92nd Street Y. They're being told to shut up at universities. They're losing their jobs just by saying on their social media that they want a humanitarian ceasefire. So there's a lot of imported censorship here from a conflict over there.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Muslim anchors, you know, being taken off their shows, Mehdi Hassan, the most notable one. Mehdi has been very outspoken.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, MSNBC's anchors, and it's a lot going on. There's a prominent person

(Maha Dakhil) working in Creative Artists (Agency) in California who made the mistake of saying that she was for a humanitarian ceasefire, and she was pushed out regardless of the clients she brought to the firm. Of course, now corporations putting on pressure; donors are pressuring universities to stifle student dissent and it's going to increasingly affect our country, not only in terms of finances and empires abroad, but it's going to deteriorate our own the democratic society. You see that?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Yeah, it already has, and it proceeds apace daily.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with retired Colonel Larry Wilkerson who until recently taught at William & Mary. He's taught at the Naval War College. He has networked former high-ranked military retired all over the country to argue for peace, for diplomacy, for an end to the empire, for controlling the runaway un-auditable Pentagon budget. And you're still doing it day after day, Larry. The Israeli military and politicians, year after year, say that Israel does not target civilians. Your response?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: That's the biggest nonsense I've ever heard, but I've heard so much nonsense coming out of Tel Aviv and now Jerusalem that I'm inured to it. And I've heard the same nonsense coming out of the White House and out of the Congress. Ralph, I testified before Elizabeth Warren's personnel subcommittee of the Senate Armed Service Committee recently where I was berated by both Democrats and Republicans. The ranking member, Rick Scott, from Florida spent his entire opening remarks berating me for calling Netanyahu a criminal for being “anti-Israel” in his words Tim Kaine, Democrat from Virginia, an otherwise relatively sane man, got his licks in when it came his time, because he was so afraid of the lobby so afraid of the greatest foreign agent operating in our country, AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and its associated ancillaries. He was so afraid he had to get a lick in at me too. You dare not criticize Israel if you're in front of the Congress.

Ralph Nader: What about the assertion that Hamas uses human shields?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I wouldn't put it past that to happen on occasion as a tactical necessity; they would say it was a necessity. But let's look at Israel's counterpart. Israel says it has rescinded its rule [The Hannibal Directive (Hebrew: *נוהל הניבעל*) that if one of their soldiers is out there in front of the fight - which happens all the time when you're fighting urban warfare - if he's out there, and he's interfering with the rest of the soldiers, you shoot and kill him. And if he's apt to be captured, you shoot and kill him, because he might divulge information under interrogation. But they disowned it recently in their own press because someone had made some to-do about it. But that's the IDF.

Ralph Nader: You think they've decided to sacrifice the hostages in Gaza.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I think Biden's one positive message - positive in the sense of the whole brutal war was: *Don't do that. If I see you do anything that's gonna threaten those American lives in particular, but the hostages lives in general*—I think there's about 197 or 198 left - *I'm gonna have a really harsh conversation with you.* I think Biden probably impressed that on BiBi, but I don't know how much it'll work. I hope it works at least a little bit, because we

need to get those hostages back. And Hamas has shown that they're willing to work and the Israelis have shown by past actions that they'll give up - I think it was 6,000 Hamas prisoners for a couple of Israeli soldiers. So, if you're that willing to protect your own citizens, then certainly you ought to be able to work some exchanges. So, let's get them out of the way before everything turns so brutal that it's impossible.

Ralph Nader: Any chance for a short truce like in 2014, for a prisoner exchange in the sense of exchanging hostages for some of the 7-8,000 Palestinians languishing in Israeli jails, many of them youngsters, without any due process or even charges against them. Any chance there?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I don't know. I hope there is, but the Israelis have been fairly adamant that there be no ceasefire, because Hamas will gain if there is. So far, we've been backing them in that. If it came up for a real sizable and understandable exchange, that is to say the circumstances suggested and everything were proper and right and could be secured, that'd be a game changer for Biden. And he would intervene, and he'd say *let's do this*. They've offered to give 100 hostages back at this point in exchange for whatever; let's do it. I think he'd have to do that because it might break and get in the press and then what would he look like?

Ralph Nader: Well, the decision by the Israeli military to go and wipe out the tunnels, they can do that with flooding, with gas, with napalm, but if they do, they're going to destroy the hostages as well.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I said yesterday on another show that this is the most difficult form of warfare, urban warfare, no question about it. But if you are honorable, if you are operating in accordance with the rules of war, Geneva Conventions and the rules of land combat warfare, ~~the rules of land combat~~, you will sacrifice your soldiers to obey that law, so you go painstakingly through the process. You don't use wholesale means to kill people indiscriminately. You don't kill hostages. Maybe they die in the process, but you aren't responsible for it. You are willing to risk three or four of your people being wounded or even killed in order to conform with the law. I don't see Israel in that guise though. I see them as not giving a damn about humanitarian law or the law of land warfare. So that's bad. It's bad for the hostages too. If they're allowed to carry it out that way, I just hope we tell them *you can't do that or you're risking our support*. That'd be a first for us, but I'd like to see that first.

Ralph Nader: Well, there's a precedent. President Eisenhower in 1956, when the Israelis, French, and British Air Force were attacking Egypt over Sinai, he just stood up and said to him, *Stop!* And they did stop. Biden is not willing to do that.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: No, he's not Dwight Eisenhower. We had a president then.

Ralph Nader: David?

David Feldman: How catastrophic an intelligence failure was this for Netanyahu? And can you give us some insight into decision-making processes that are clouded by shame? George W. Bush must have been humiliated after 9/11. Security was his calling card, and it happened on his watch. Security was Netanyahu's calling card. So how does shame cloud their judgment moving

forward?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Majorly. Bush actually convened a meeting in the Oval Office with Franklin Graham and some other evangelicals. And in his meeting with a few of us later, he essentially told them, *I'm full rage. Help me control that rage. I'm a Christian. I need to control that rage.* I don't think he did that good a job of it. And I don't think Netanyahu will probably do that good a job of it. He doesn't seem to be doing that good a job of it. And there was also, as you intimated in your question, a real fabric for about 24 hours around the White House of *wow, this exceeds Pearl Harbor. Will the American people throw us out?* And then as Washington failed to evacuate itself - that's what the president said to do - because we couldn't evacuate everybody methodically, the American people seemed to be in shock. But then they kind of gelled behind a few things that came out of the administration. And whoa, all of a sudden realized *we can get them back if we've lost them. All we got to do is appear like we're really angry and doing something.* And so, when Colin and Will talked to the Vice President and President about when you do war against these terrorists, there's some drawbacks: One, you're going to elevate them to warrior status. Two, you're going to increase the executive power to the point where things might get out of hand. Boy, did they get out of hand, AT & T, Verizon, and everybody else joining in to get them out of hand. But it was a troubled time. And you have a hard time managing yourself during these troubled times. And no one really tried to on our side. It was a long time before we started thinking rationally again.

Ralph Nader: Hannah?

Hannah Feldman: What is the most accurate way to refer to the conflict? I remember being taught to refer to it as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But the language seems to paint them as combatants in a level war. What is the most accurate way to refer to the situation? Is it conflict? Is it the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or is there a more appropriate term?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: We wrestled with this one, and we made really bad decisions, calling them "unlawful combatants" and other terms that we came up with in order to try and assuage the fact we had left (The) Geneva (Convention), our own creation, really. They're "guerillas." They're guerrillas fighting back against a super-modern military who don't have tanks, who don't have armored personnel carriers, who don't have all the sophisticated weaponry that they're up against. So, they're using time immemorial guerrilla tactics that have been around forever. And we've invented all these terms we love to use—"unlawful combatants" and "terrorists." But three billion people in the world think the biggest terrorists in the world live in Washington. Two billion think it's absolutely non-debatable that the biggest terrorists live in Washington. So, *one man's terrorist, to quote Ronald Reagan, is another man's freedom fighter* and vice versa. I think that the way to look at this conflict right now is that it's unconscionable and violative of every rule of war in the book, violative of humanitarian decency. And it's one-sided to the maximum, the same way you would look at - as I said before - the extermination of the Native Americans in the Black Hills in order for gold miners to get in there.

Ralph Nader: Just to elaborate your point for people who don't have the context: the war in Iraq killed over a million Iraqi civilians, and they're still dying from the destitution, disease, and untreated injuries.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: In the diaspora, either internally displaced or somewhere else outside of Iraq's borders, we killed two and a half million, maybe more. There's a verdict not firmly in yet on Vietnam; we dropped more iron bombs on North Vietnam than we dropped on Nazi Germany in World War II. So, what's terror?

Ralph Nader: Yeah, there's Libya. There's supporting the Saudis in Yemen. There's the overreaction in Afghanistan - to put it mildly - for 20 years, civilians dying, children, women, men, families. Yeah, I mean, we've got a great capability of turning our back on what are clearly violations of international law, the Geneva Conventions, even our own constitution. These are not declared wars, even though they're wars.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: But Josh Paul, the State Department individual who just voted with his conscience, is just the tip of the iceberg as to what the United States has been doing with its armaments shipped to Israel.

Ralph Nader: Talk about Josh Paul, the State Department official who was responsible for arms transfers and security assistance to foreign governments for a number of years who quit just recently.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Yeah, he quit on moral grounds, ethical grounds. And I've been there. I saw some of the things Israel was doing with our equipment, and most of the equipment we give them under FMS or whatever methodology we give them, the equipment comes with a caveat. And the caveat says essentially, *if you're killing men, women, and children with it, we'll take it back or we'll censure you* or do something at least. Hell, we've rarely ever even *démarche* [official communication between 2 governments re concerning actions by one] them when they would do something with it. It was just the order of the day, it was business. I'm told right now - I hope this is true and Josh is not the only one - I'm told the Dissent Channel at the State Department which is a way clear to the secretary or any foreign service officer - I think they extended it to the civil service now - to send in a dissent. And the secretary must look at it, that's the ruling. I'm told that that Channel is so clogged with messages into the Secretary that Blinken couldn't read them all if he tried and isn't trying. I'm told that they're putting a squash on it. And they may even cancel the Dissent Channel or suspend it for a period of time because it's overwhelmed with people registering their disdain for American foreign policy.

Ralph Nader: Well in case some listeners are still skeptical here about the inequities, hold on a few minutes until Bruce Fein comes on, and he'll quote the famous oft-quoted remark by David Ben Gurion, the founder of Israel, first prime minister, seen by Israelis as the George Washington of their country. And you'll see his comment to Nachum Goldmann, then head of the World Zionist Organization, in just a few minutes. Francesco, your comment or question?

Francesco DeSantis: Yeah, I'd like to ask Colonel Wilkerson, since a two-state solution no longer seems possible, where do we go from here? What could a contemporary peace deal look like? A lot of people have brought up the idea of a single binational state with equal rights. Is that a realistic goal?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I think the two-state solution should be forced on both sides. It ought to be like Cyprus. It ought to be like Kashmir. It ought to be like the Korean Peninsula and a number of other places around the world. I don't care if it lasts for 75 years like Cyprus as I think the Korean Peninsula since 1953. We should divide the territory in accordance with UN Resolution 242. We should put the Palestinians on their side, the Israelis on their side, and let them figure out if the Palestinians who live inside Israel, some of whom have Israeli citizenship, move or not. That's an individual decision. Put a UN force in perpetuity between them and tell them *live with it, or we'll shoot from the UN force in both directions and enforce it*. That's what we need to do. Another possibility—I work every other Sunday with Joseph Pasifar of the Israeli-Palestinian Confederation. And we have all manner of people on there—Knesset, members, current citizens of Israel, Palestine, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. And they come together and express their views, and we vote on issues. We put a government over the Palestinian Authority (PA), Hamas and Israel. And each of those entities has veto power over legislation we pass. But we conduct elections in the 14 million or so people between the [Jordan] river and the [Mediterranean] sea. Those elections put in place a president, vice president and a 300-member parliament. We take over, gradually, lots of things like enforcement of border security and checkpoints. We take over all manner of education. We vote every other Sunday on these issues and legislation. Many times, we have people, most often Israelis, who veto it, sometimes Palestinians of both stripes (PA and Hamas). But that's another possible solution. People think it's pie in the sky. But if you could get this umbrella federal government over the three entities - now I guess two - and enforce legislation, over time, a single democratic state could possibly be created. We [this study group] were just getting ready - right before October 7th, we had built a \$30,000 sign that says in big, huge letters, “A Jewish State Is Not Good For Jews.” We had the permission of the Israeli government to put it up in Tel Aviv for 30 days on a main avenue. That's off now, of course. But that just tells you there are possibilities if we just don't give up.

Ralph Nader: Well, we're out of time, unfortunately. We've been talking with retired Colonel Larry Wilkerson. Any last comment you want to make before we close?

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: I'm not a religious man normally, but I tell you what, I've taken to praying. This is a tragic situation and one the U.S. has had every hand in making.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much, Larry Wilkerson, to be continued.

Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson: Thank you, Ralph, and all of you.

Steve Skrovan: We've been speaking with Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson. We will link to his work at RalphNaderRadioHour.com, and we will also link to the Josh Paul State Department op-ed from the *Washington Post* on our Substack site. Up next, we'll talk to Bruce Fein about the international legal implications of the U.S. participation in support of Israel. But first, let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

Russell: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your *Corporate Crime Reporter* “Morning Minute” for Friday, October 27, 2023. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Police are investigating possible corporate manslaughter charges at the hospital where serial

killer Lucy Letby worked. That's according to a report from the BBC. The former nurse, age 33, was jailed in England last August for murdering seven babies and attempting to kill six others at the Countess of Chester Hospital. Chester police said the latest investigation was in its early stages. Lawyers representing some of the victims' families said they were reassured that steps were being taken to consider the actions of management. Organizations and companies can be found guilty of corporate manslaughter in the UK as a result of serious management failures that result in gross breaches of the duty of care under the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act of 2007. For the *Corporate Crime Reporter*, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman, Ralph, Hannah, Francesco and the rest of the team. Let's talk to Bruce Fein about international law in relation to what's going on between Israel and Gaza. David?

David Feldman: Bruce Fein is a constitutional scholar and an expert on international law. Mr. Fein was Associate Deputy Attorney General under Ronald Reagan and he's argued before the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court at The Hague. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Bruce Fein.

Ralph Nader: Thank you, Bruce, for coming on. There's a legality issue here if we believe in the rule of law and international rules of orderly jurisprudence that you have looked into in terms of your experience, and we both sent a letter to President Biden a few days ago, outlining it, because we took note of the several times he cautioned Israeli leaders about after October 7th, "to operate by the laws of war," How are the United States and Israel operating by the laws of war?

Bruce Fein: That's a wonderful question, and I think the audience will be informed to receive a bit of a background, because it's often said, that this is just Israel responding in self-defense. They have no other course of action and therefore everything they're doing is au courant [well-informed]. Here is a quote from David Ben-Gurion, who was kind of the George Washington of Israel. He was its first prime minister. He was lionized for decades before he finally retired after decades in the Israeli government. And this is his Ben-Gurion's quote as the head of the World Zionist organization. It is not a quote that is reported by Hamas, among others: "If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. Israel. It is natural. We have taken their country. It is true. God promised it to us. But how could that interest them? Our God is not theirs. There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz. But was that their fault? They see but one thing. We have come and stolen their country. Why would they accept that?" This is reported by the head of the World Zionist Organization: to be a Zionist is someone who believes that there ought to be a state of Israel, a nation for Jews. So that gives you an understanding of the dynamics, the clash between the largely Arab, Muslim, Christians, and the Jews, and that neighborhood. For anybody who would like to verify this, it was taken from page 21 of Nachum Goldmann book, *Jewish Paradox* published by Grosset and Dunlap. And I'm not getting a commission for any purchases that you make. The publication year is 1978.

Ralph Nader: What have been the violations of international law?

Bruce Fein: In summary, the landscape looks like the United States now itself has become guilty of violating the laws of war, the ones that Biden himself said should be the operational norm for Israel. How has he done that? He has systematically given weapons and military intelligence and financial support to Israel to commit the crime of genocide against Palestinians by creating conditions of life calculated to destroy the group, in part, by becoming a co-belligerent, giving weapons that are used to kill vastly disproportionate number of civilian Palestinians compared to any legitimate military objective. He's used as a co-belligerent the military weapons that help to require forcible relocation of more than a million, at least 1.1 million Gazans in North Gaza to South Gaza, that's forcible relocation being a violation of law of war. And then he's engaged in what I'd call going and using and assisting Israel and using the weapons and his military intelligence to go vastly beyond any right of self-defense, which is permitted under Article 51 of the United Nations. At that point, it becomes a violation of the prohibition of aggressive war. So you put all that together and it really is almost laughable to have President of the United States, Biden stand up there and proclaim as the fundamental principle of U.S. international foreign policy is make it a rule-based international order as he's violating the orders himself. And that's why we end up with blowback.

Ralph Nader: Thank you very much, Bruce Fein, for your observations on the current scene and always upholding the international rule of law, without which we have wars of aggression; we have empire; we have terrible courses of violence around the world, which is why the rule of law is something that has to be more than just lip service. It has to be deep in the veins of our foreign and diplomatic policies abroad. Thank you.

Steve Skrovan: I want to thank our guests again, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson and Bruce Fein. 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" featuring Francesco DeSantis and "In Case You Haven't Heard." A transcript of this program will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* Substack site soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free. Go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: Saturday, October 28th was Tort Law Education Day at the American Museum of Tort Law. Join Ralph Saturday, October 28th at 1pm Eastern for the Museum's free virtual panel on Why Don't People Sue? If you missed the live event, go to tortmuseum.org to view the live recording. Remember to continue the conversation after each show, go to the comments section at Ralphnaderradiohour.com and post a comment at question on this week's episode. We read them all.

David Feldman: The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marin. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

Steve Skrovan: Our theme music "Stand Up Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is the indefatigable Elisabeth Solomon. Our associate producer is

Hannah Feldman. Our social media manager is Stephen Wendt.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you. And if you want a Department of Peace in our government in Washington, Congressman Jim McGovern is the most likely one to introduce the bill. We have a Department of War. We don't have a Department of Peace. We don't wage peace. We don't work on conflict avoidance. So get in touch with Jim McGovern, Democrat from Massachusetts. Call him up and urge him to put that bill in so we can have hearings and all those good peace groups around the country can have a rallying point. Thank you.