

PART ONE

FRANK GAFFNEY: Welcome to Secure Freedom Radio. This is Frank Gaffney, your host and guide for what I think of as an intelligence briefing on the war for the free world. A man I've been privileged to know and work with over many years in various facets of that war is the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy at the George W. Bush Pentagon. Douglas J. Feith is his name. He has distinguished himself both in that role and in many others, before and since, including today as a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute. As a man of great perspicacity, thoughtfulness, clarity of vision, and an ability to articulate that is almost unparalleled—certainly in official Washington, these days. I'm privileged to call him a friend, and better yet to have him as a guest for a full hour of a very, very important, very timely, very special conversation about what I call "the ObamaBomb deal."

Doug Feith, welcome back to Secure Freedom Radio. Great to have you with us.

DOUG FEITH: Great to be with you.

FG: You have observed, Doug, in various quarters, that the argument that we're hearing that this deal has problems, tends to draw us into a discussion of the details. And we will spend, in the course of this hour, a fair amount of time talking about the details, but like Charles Krauthammer, I believe, you've concluded that the Devil is actually in the structure of the thing, for starters. Give us a sense of that assessment.

DF: I think that the essence of this Iran deal is a problem because Iran will get relief from the economic sanctions, which means in the first year alone, around \$150 billion dollars worth of cash. It gets this in return for some promises relating to its nuclear weapons program. The U.S. in general has problems with Iran that span a wide area. Their nuclear weapons program is clearly one major problem in our relationship with Iran, but it's not the only one. The Iranians are extremely hostile to the West. They are a revolutionary ideological government trying to spread their Islamist revolution around the world. They are major supporters of terrorism: they support Hezbollah, they support Palestinian Islamist jihad and Hamas and other groups. They've been active from Argentina to Europe, throughout the Middle East and elsewhere. And they are a major threat to American friends and partners in the region—in the Persian Gulf area, Saudi Arabia and the other Arabian Peninsula countries, and Israel.

So giving them \$150 billion dollars right away, and more money down the road through the relief of sanctions, simply in return for their making some promises relating to their nuclear program, means that they're going to be enormously strengthened in all these other problem areas. Then furthermore, the promises they're making in the nuclear area are not anywhere near as impressive as

President Obama and Secretary Kerry have suggested. So that's fundamentally the problem with this deal, and I don't think you need to get into the details of the 100 plus page agreement to see that flaw in the agreement.

FG: Yeah, we will get into those details. Having said that, I'd just as stay at the 30,000-foot level, Doug Feith. The argument that the Administration is basically making, is that the possibility that this deal will work out, and actually keep Iran from having nuclear weapons, for a period of time—and there's a heated dispute as to how long that will be, but they're arguing it will be at least for 10 years, and throughout that period they'll be a year from a breakout and so on—and the alternative to that very, well, basic and perhaps even inadequate arrangement, is that they will avoid a war. That we will not have that as the only real alternative. Talk a little bit about your response to that contention, and why the critics of this agreement are entitled to actually to find in recent experience, including that you had in your time in the Pentagon as the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, an alternative in the form of what I think you've called in the Wall Street Journal coercive diplomacy.

DF: Yes, the President has said that the alternatives to his diplomatic approach to Iran—the approach that produced this deal—was war. And so he's been able to deflect a lot of criticism of the deal by saying that the criticism may or may not be true, but the alternative is clearly worse than anything he's done, because the alternative is war. I don't think that's a correct way of seeing this situation. I don't think he's correct in saying that the only alternative to his diplomacy is war. There are two major ways of approaching diplomacy with problem countries.

One way, which I would call “cooperative diplomacy,” is based on the idea that we can make a deal with a basically well intentioned other country based on a common agreement on the rules of the road. And if you're dealing with a country that's trustworthy, if you're dealing with a country where you have some differences but you share principles, then you can resolve a problem in a cooperative way and expect them to comply with their arrangement, and the whole operation is cooperative. I don't think it's realistic to do that with a country like Iran that is as hostile and uncooperative as they are.

But the alternative to that kind of cooperative diplomacy--which is the approach that the Obama Administration in fact took towards the Iranians, and I think is naïve--the alternative is not war. The alternative is what I would call “coercive diplomacy.” Where you use diplomacy to clarify, not to seek cooperation with a hostile and uncooperative regime, but to clarify lines. When you say to a regime that you don't trust, “We want to make sure that there are not misunderstandings here. If you do certain things, then we will do certain things in response. But if you do hostile things, then we will increase the pressure on you as follows.” So you use diplomacy to try to shape the other country's behavior by being clear about what kinds of penalties they will face if they do dangerous and hostile and uncooperative

things, or what kind of relief you can give them if they start doing things that you think are more beneficial and improves the security of the world. That kind of diplomacy, which has nothing to do with assuming the good intentions of the other side, was an option.

We would have been much better off if we're going to conduct diplomacy with Iran, conducting a coercive type diplomacy than this completely naïve approach that President Obama and Secretary Kerry used with the Iranians.

FG: Yeah, naïve is a charitable way to describe it. Feckless and, as indicated, wholly inadequate, perhaps, is a little more to the point.

Doug Feith, we have to take a short break. When we come back, we'll talk a bit about that practice of coercive diplomacy. During the Bush Administration, and its success in ending the nuclear weapons program of Libya, and more generally, the negotiation practice of this Administration by contrast. Doug Feith, the author of "War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism," and many other fine, fine publications, right after this.

PART TWO

FRANK GAFFNEY: We're back, visiting with Douglas Feith, the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the number three position in the Defense Department during the George W. Bush administration—at an epic moment, by the way, chronicled in his masterful memoirs entitled, "War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism."

Doug, we were talking a bit about there being really an alternative approach to dealing with a hostile power, like the Iranians, in the fashion that the Obama Administration has done, which you call a "collaborative diplomacy," or "cooperative diplomacy." In the case of disarming Libya of its nuclear weapons program, your team was highly successful in applying this other approach, the "coercive diplomacy," as you call it. Just remind us of both the difference in approach and the difference in outcome.

DOUG FEITH: The George W. Bush Administration made it clear that we were focused on the particular dangers that came from regimes that both supported terrorism and pursued weapons of mass destruction. Because after 9/11, which created a new era in international affairs, there was an appreciation of how dangerous weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorist groups would be. So President Bush focused the world's attention with his Axis of Evil speech on the

idea that there are countries that both pursue WMD and support terrorism, and could become sources of WMD to terrorist group. That was a major theme.

Having made that point, President Bush then decided to overthrow the government of Afghanistan and then to overthrow the government of Iraq. Immediately after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, or soon thereafter, the United States intercepted a shipment of nuclear weapons related material that was going to Libya. We intercepted the ship in the Mediterranean, and it highlighted the Libyan nuclear weapons program. When that interception occurred, the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi panicked, and realized that he may suffer the fate of the leaders of Afghanistan and Iraq. Through his panic, he decided that he was going to change Libya's policy on WMD, and give up his program. So he invited the British and the Americans in and told us what he had in the way of WMD production capability and facilities and material. And told us much more than we knew—I mean, this wasn't like dealing with the Iranians now, where we have to pull teeth to get information, and they give us dishonest information, and they drag this out. Gaddafi had obviously come to the decision, he felt coerced by circumstances. He came to the decision that he wanted out of that business. So he completely openly revealed information, invited American and British experts in, and told us a lot more than we knew. I mean, it wasn't a matter of grilling him and trying to extract pieces of information; he just opened up the books as it were. We dismantled his chemical and nuclear programs, and that was a really high watermark in international nonproliferation efforts. It's an example of how a regime of that kind can be coerced by its concern of what the consequences are of its pursuing weapons of mass destruction programs that we consider to be unacceptable and extremely dangerous.

FG: Let me just ask, Doug Feith, because you not only served as I've mentioned in the George W. Bush Administration, at the highest levels of government. Back in the day when we were young men in the Reagan Administration, you were responsible for negotiations policy as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. In the course of what we've been watching here, and specifically the contrast between coercive diplomacy as successfully practiced in Libya by the Bush Administration, we've witnessed a totally different approach—again, you've suggested it was naïve. It really seems as though it was hapless, and almost pathetic, certainly humiliating, really, the way that John Kerry and the Obama team, and for that matter it must be said the other members of this negotiation to the extent that they played a role in shaping its final outcome, was absolutely at odds with this approach. It was pleading, not coercive. It was capitulating, not demanding.

Give us a flavor as you see it, with the broad brush of history as the background here, how this negotiation's practice, tradecraft, performed and gave rise to this particular result.

DF: I don't think that the problem that President Obama and Secretary Kerry had with the Iranians resulted from their inability to negotiate in a tough fashion. I don't think that's the problem. The problem—and the fact that they can be tough is proven by how tough they are in negotiating with their domestic political opponents.

FG: [LAUGHS] Yeah, the toughest seems reserved for that, I must say.

DF: I really think it's important to understand that it's not a lack of negotiating skill that we saw in their approach to Iran. I think there was a strategic idea they had--a really bad strategic idea in my opinion--that the negotiations reflected, and looked like they were being poorly negotiated because they were actually being motivated by, I think, a completely misguided strategic idea. And the strategic idea that motivated these talks was that if the United States changed its behavior and became friendlier, more modest, more cooperative with the Iranians, more apologetic towards the Iranians, that we could repair the damage in our relationship with Iran, which President Obama believes the United States was responsible for over the decades, and that we could turn Iran from a hostile country into a cooperative and, in time, friendly country. And that we could move from confrontation to cooperation and joint projects with Iran.

I think that's the reason that we made concession after concession. It's not that President Obama is incapable of being hardheaded and tough. If you look at the way that he's dealt with the Republicans on Capitol Hill, he's been one of the most hardheaded and one of the toughest and one of the most ruthless negotiators that we've ever had as President.

FG: No, it's true. It's a very fair point, and I want to develop a little further after the break. This is really the crux of the issue, is what has come about as a result of this misguided policy approach towards the Iranians.

When we come back, the former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Douglas J. Feith, will talk with us about some of the particulars of this deal, that make it not only defective in myriad ways, but downright dangerous for folks like us. That and more, straight ahead.

PART THREE

FRANK GAFFNEY: Welcome back. We are engaged in a very thoughtful, extended, and important conversation with Douglas J. Feith, formerly the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, among other things. He worked in other capacities in the Defense

Department, the National Security Council. He is currently a senior fellow with the Hudson Institute, a highly regarded institution in Washington, D.C., and the director of its Center for National Security Strategies.

You can find his writings both at the Hudson.org website, and frequently on the pages of outstanding publications like the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Washington Post and so on. He is the author of the single best book on the, well, for want of a better term, the War on Terror. I call it the War for the Free World, but it is the subtitle of his book, entitled “War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism.” He was not only inside the Pentagon, he was one of its preeminent figures in strategizing and executing the plan for dealing with the war that was thrust upon us with 9/11.

Doug Feith, again, thank you so much for your time today. You’ve laid the groundwork brilliantly in terms of how we got here. Let’s talk about where we are now and where we’re likely to be as a result of this deal. And there are five things that I’d like to particularly ask you to address about it--quite apart from the issues that are generally discussed, notably that the infrastructure remains in place, and verification is mostly, as you’ve taught me, a matter of looking under the lamplight like the drunk who dropped his keys some place else, but the light’s better there. Missing, therefore, the real possibilities—in fact, likelihood—that there will be a lot of stuff going on Iran that we won’t be privy to.

But let me ask you about five specific things. The first is that we now find ourselves as a result of this agreement committed to help actually advance Iran’s nuclear program. Including by bringing to bear advanced nuclear reactor technology and the like, and assistance from the so-called international community. What are the implications of that?

DOUG FEITH: One of the flaws in the approach to nonproliferation for many years has been the idea that when countries promise not to develop nuclear weapons, that various other countries around the world will commit to helping them develop peaceful nuclear technologies. Unfortunately, this has been used by cynical governments to extract important nuclear technology that governments then use for improper military purposes. That basic idea continues in this agreement, and so there are provision in here for countries to feel obliged to help the Iranians develop nuclear technologies that the Iranians promise they will not use for improper purposes—but we know from their history they’ve violated promises of that kind.

FG: Notably the North Koreans come to mind, and I was struck by the news this morning that the North Koreans have said they’re not interested in a deal like the Iranians have, having had a deal like that already, as you know, under the Clinton Administration, Doug, which has left them actually with a nuclear weapons program, full stop.

Doug, there are two other facets of this deal that don't have anything to do with the nuclear program, per se, that we were told were therefore outside of the ambit of these negotiations, and yet it seems as though very, very ominous concessions were made. Namely with respect to the embargos on Iran's access to conventional arms imports, and also ballistic missile technologies and activities. What, again, are the implications of those concessions?

DF: I think those really are among the most outrageous aspects of a shockingly bad deal. The argument that they are outrageous is supported by what the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff--President Obama's own Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff--said just a few days before the deal was concluded, when he was asked in front of a Congressional panel about the possibility that the United States might lift the restrictions on sales of conventional weapons and missiles to Iran. He described maintaining those restrictions as a red line for him. Implying that he couldn't support the agreement if those restrictions were removed. But the deal did in fact remove those restrictions. You, in your question, highlighted the fact that these are not tied closely to the nuclear program.

What the Administration did was it justified not raising a long list of problems that we have with Iran that are really crucial to our whole strategic difficulty with the Iranian regime. It justified not raising those issues on the grounds that it was going to be focused narrowly on the nuclear issue. Then at the last minute, the Iranians and the Russians demanded that things that would be beneficial to Iran that were not tied closely to the nuclear program, like the conventional weapons restrictions and the missile restrictions, should be brought into the deal. The Obama Administration said yes. So when it came to things that would be beneficial to us that were not directly related to the nuclear deal, the Administration left those things out, but at the last minute was willing to grant bringing in some concessions that were beneficial to Iran. That really is one of the most troubling aspects of this very troubling deal.

FG: Both of us have sort of suggested that these things like ballistic missiles don't have anything to do with the nuclear program, except of course that they are the delivery system of choice for the nuclear weapons program. I think it's fair to say that in the absence of a nuclear weapon, having an intercontinental-range ballistic missile doesn't make much sense, and we're clearly going to see that capability coming along under the Iranian efforts. Perhaps aided and abetted by an international community that will perhaps quite soon be capable of giving them a hand. All intensifying the threat to this country, of course.

DF: And their ability to advance their missile program—missiles that could eventually reach us—is enormously increased by the large sums of money they're going to get with the lifting of the sanctions.

FG: And that's really what I wanted to hit again is as we discussed, Doug, elsewhere, the Chairman of the Oversight Committee of the House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Pete Roskam, says the equivalent amount in the U.S. economy, which is of course much larger than Iran's, of \$150 billion dollar windfall, would be \$8 trillion dollars. That suggests a massive increase in the ability of the Iranians, as you've said earlier, to engage in all manner of activities, including those that threaten us—another very troubling facet of this.

Let me ask you finally, Doug, one of the things that I guess came about at the very, very end of the endgame, another astonishing concession, has to do with not only advancing, as we've discussed, the Iranian nuclear program, but actually committing to protect it. What is up with that?

DF: This entire deal takes a program that had made Iran for many years a pariah state in the world, and the subject of the United Nations' resolutions that required countries—actually obligated all UN members to cut their economic ties to Iran. It turns that program that had made Iran into a pariah into a completely legitimate program that is entitled to the kind of protection that every country has for its legitimate activities.

FG: With the help of the international community, in this case. That's the thing that just boggles my mind, is that we're finding ourselves taking on responsibilities to take that same pariah state qualifying program and make it now something that we're investing in protecting.

Doug, we have to pause for just a moment. When we come back, I want to talk about, having set the stage as you have masterfully, what this is likely to mean in terms of actually increasing the prospects of war in the Middle East, and perhaps beyond.

Douglas J. Feith, our guest, back with that and more, straight ahead.

PART FOUR

FRANK GAFFNEY: We're back, joined for our final installment of this very important conversation over the hour with Douglas J. Feith. A friend and colleague of many years, notably the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy during the George W. Bush Administration. You really will not understand much of what we're talking about without addressing it through the prism of his superb memoirs, "War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism." Doug, again, thank you for your time.

Let's turn to crystal ball gazing, if we can. What do you think the prospects are, since much is now being made as we discussed earlier, of this deal as an alternative to war? That we may actually wind up with war as a result of this deal? A war that, by the way, I believe has been underway since 1979 on the part of the Iranians against this country and others. But the possibility of it turning into something vastly worse through the reasons we've just been discussing.

DOUG FEITH: Well, one of the famous traits of many governments all over the world throughout history is that they accomplish the opposite of their intended result. I think that this deal on the Iranian nuclear program is going to have the effect of increasing the drive of many other countries in the region and around the world, to get nuclear weapons of their own. I think one of the worst consequences of legitimating the Iranian program after years of efforts by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the UN Security Council and the European Union negotiators, and then the group that negotiated this deal—one of the consequences of Iran's defying all of them, and violating its nonproliferation obligations under the non-proliferation treaty, and doing all of that and then emerging on the other side as a victor that gets rewarded and gets sanctions lifted and everything else without having to actually give up its nuclear weapons program, is that the Iranians proved that they can defy and essentially destroy, the non-proliferation architecture of the world without penalty.

That lesson is going to be seen and heeded by, in the first instance, all their neighbors in the Middle East. I think it's likely that we will see an interest in nuclear weapons programs on the part of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and other countries. I think that that will have effects not only in the Middle East but around the world. Moreover, one of the most worrisome aspects of this entire horrible deal, is not simply the bad things that Iran will do, but even if Iran completely complies with its obligations, one of the consequences of this deal is going to be to encourage other countries around the world to get their own nuclear weapons programs.

If we wind up down the road, in 10, 20, 30 years down the road, with a world in which in twenty countries or thirty countries have their own nuclear weapons, the likelihood of nuclear war increases enormously. And the world becomes a much more dangerous place. That's something that is extremely ironic because this president came into office committed to what he called "Nuclear Zero," or a world with zero nuclear weapons—which I think is an unrealistic goal anyway. But he's going to wind up achieving a world with two, three, four times the number of nuclear weapons countries as a result of this extremely ill-advised diplomacy that he's done with the Iranians.

FG: And you know, Doug, one of the things that I'm struck by—I think you're absolutely right of course—is that countries that seek this kind of capability, especially under circumstances in which they feel an imminent threat from this rising hegemon, is that they don't have to go about it the way the Iranians have

done. Painstakingly, and covertly building all of the necessary elements of the food chain, if you will, of a nuclear weapons program. They can simply buy them. There seem to be people who are quite willing to sell them, and probably Pakistan—they have in the past, with A.Q. Khan's network—but also presumably the cash-strapped North Korea. So we may see this upon us rather quickly, and as you say, it seems to me not only the real prospect of nuclear war in a very difficult and dangerous part of the world, but possibly not one that can be contained to it.

That brings me to perhaps our last question, or line of questioning Doug, about the decision of the Obama Administration to pursue UN approval of this deal through the Security Council on Monday, before Congress was given an opportunity—even under the very truncated and, I think, anti-Constitutional arrangements set out by the Corker-Cardin deal.

Talk about the role of the UN, the role of the Administration in sort of raising up its authority over our own sovereign decision making process, such as it is.

DF: Well, the president has closed off the options that Congress had by going to the UN and getting the sanctions removed before he's even heard from Congress as to whether it approves this deal. I think members of Congress have every right to be angry that the president showed basically no respect at all for our Congress' views on this subject before he took the crucial action of removing those sanctions.

What a lot of people don't understand is--you hear from the debates on television and radio that this is not a fact that people appreciate it—if the president had not gone to the UN to remove those sanctions, the situation would be this: those sanctions said that the Iranians have to actually roll back their nuclear program. Those sanctions said that there were severe economic penalties imposed on Iran, unless Iran, for example, completely stopped enrichment of Uranium. It said that those sanctions cannot be removed unless the UN weapons inspectors certified that the Iranians had done a long list of things, including things like completely stop their Uranium enrichment.

Now, had this deal not been made, those sanctions would have remained in place. And even if the Chinese and the Russians regretted that they supported the sanctions to begin with, there is nothing they could have done about them, because in order to remove them you would have to pass a new resolution that the United States would have to vote for—we had a veto. So we could have kept those sanctions in place indefinitely.

When the President says that there was no alternative to this deal, the alternative would have been to simply leave those UN sanctions, which were quite tough. Now, it's important to understand that they were not tough enough to actually force the Iranians to give up their weapons program. That's been clear. But they were tough enough to do really severe economic harm to Iran. That at least limited the Iranian government's ability to do harm.

FG: Which brings us back to our earlier point, that there was a coercive diplomatic option still on the table--until the president removed it through this action, meant clearly to circumvent and, I think, sabotage whatever Congressional oversight there might have been.

Doug, we will be fighting them on the beaches and fighting them in the streets on this one, I think, in the Congress and elsewhere. We look forward to doing so with your insights and great leadership. Thank you for all of your service to our country. It is a distinct privilege to have you as a colleague and friend, and I am very grateful to you for taking the time to discuss all of these issues with us. I hope you'll come back to us again very soon to do more of it, especially as this, well, possibly tragic circumstance plays out. I hope the rest of you will come back for more tomorrow. Same time, same station. Until then, this is Frank Gaffney. Thanks for listening.