



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on June 21, 2019

Did Tucker Carlson Avert War With Iran?

Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson reportedly played an important role in persuading President Donald Trump to call off bombing strikes on Iran in retaliation for the shooting down of an American (unmanned) drone above the Strait of Hormuz. Carlson has been advising Trump both publicly and privately against being sucked into a war with Iran, and praised Trump's restraint in his Thursday monologue.



What is clear is that Trump called off planned attacks on targets such as missile batteries and radar, despite planes already being in the air. Ships were also closing into attack, when military personnel were told that the pre-dawn attack had been nixed.

Trump tweeted an explanation early Friday, saying he had cancelled the strikes after he asked how many would die, and was told about 150 Iranians. He said that he concluded that going forward with the attack would not be “proportionate to shooting down an unmanned drone.” Trump did concede that the attack almost happened, though. “We were cocked & loaded to retaliate last night on three different sites when I asked how many will die.”

The *New York Times* reported, “Planes were in the air and ships were in position, but no missiles had been fired when word came to stand down.”

Earlier in the day, Trump already appeared to prefer some alternative to a military response. Trump told reporters, “I have a feeling that it was a mistake made by somebody that shouldn’t have been doing what they did,” adding, “it could have been someone loose and stupid.”

It made a “big, big difference” that the RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drone was unmanned, Trump told reporters.

The United States has not always been so eager for war. In 1937, a Japanese pilot bombed a U.S. gunboat, the USS *Panay*, on the Yangtze River in China, killing several sailors. The Japanese, who had been fighting a war against China for several years, quickly apologized and paid an indemnity to the families of slain sailors, possibly averting war between the United States and Japan. The Japanese argued that the attack on an American naval vessel was not authorized by higher-ups in the military and government.

In contrast, one can only imagine what would happen today were an American ship attacked by an Iranian bomber plane, killing American sailors. Fortunately, in this case, no one was killed, and Trump seems to be arguing that a lower-ranking Iranian official had ordered the attack, and calling off the U.S. attack — a wise decision since such an attack could rightly be deemed an act of war by the target nation, thus resulting in a proportionate response followed by the possibility of all-out war. As well, under the U.S. Constitution, only Congress, not presidents, are authorized to commit the country to war. Unfortunately recent presidents such as Ronald Reagan (in Libya), Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama authorized strikes on countries or groups we were not officially at war with, further



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creating unconstitutional precedent for the imperial presidency we have today.

The United States and Iran had exchanged claims of exactly where the \$130 million drone was when it was shot down by Iran. “This drone was in international waters, clearly,” Trump insisted, while the Iranians argued that the surveillance drone had entered Iranian airspace, within eight miles of Iran. Lt. General Joseph Guastella, who commands the Air Force for the Central Command region of the Middle East, disputed that, arguing the drone was in international waters — that the closest the drone got to Iran was 21 miles.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran’s United Nations ambassador, claimed that the drone ignored several radio warnings, adding in a letter to the UN Security Council that Iran “does not seek war,” but it will defend its “land, sea and air.”

Hossein Salami, who commands the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, told Iranian television, “We are not going to get engaged in a war with any country, but we are fully prepared for war. Today’s incident was a clear sign of this precise message, so we are continuing our resistance.”

When Trump ran for president in 2016, he and Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), were probably the two Republican candidates with the strongest “non-interventionist” position of all the 18 hopefuls. But as president, he was persuaded by aides to bomb Syria — twice — despite that country having never done anything to the United States. In his administration, National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have both advocated more aggressive measures toward Iran. It is not clear who inside the Trump administration, if anyone, is urging moderation in dealings with Iran to counter war-hawks Pompeo and Bolton.

That is why it appears that the more cautionary tone of Carlson, a Fox News commentator, might have provided an alternative voice to the president. In a monologue going back to July 24, 2018, [Carlson made the case against war](#), telling his viewers that all the talk about Russia is obscuring “the real news” that the United States is “inching closer” to conflict with Iran.

“If there is one thing Washington loves more than open borders and fat lobbying contracts, it’s pointless wars half a world away,” Carlson said. “Contractors get rich. Neocon intellectuals feel powerful. Bill Kristol, Max Boot and Nancy Pelosi agree on one thing, war is good as long as the war does not help the United States.”

Inside the Trump administration, Carlson said, is Bolton, who has long called for “toppling the Iranian government again and again, though tellingly he’s never suggested what might replace the Iranian government once it’s toppled.”

We should all worry about this, Carlson continued, especially those who support Trump: “If President Trump decides to go to war with Iran, it will destroy his presidency just as the Iraq War destroyed the presidency of his Republican predecessor George W. Bush.” Carlson could have also noted that President Lyndon Johnson’s adventure in Vietnam had destructive effects on the Democratic Party, which won only one of the next six presidential elections. After World War I, Woodrow Wilson’s Democrats lost the Congress and the presidency in 1920 — by a landslide. The Korean War contributed to the loss of the White House by the Democrats in 1952.

Carlson detailed the dangers to the nation of any war with Iran: “Geographically, Iran is about four times the size of Iraq. It has three times as many people as Iraq had when we invaded. Iraq was a divided country along religious lines. Iran is not. It’s cohesive.”



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Besides that, "It's a much richer country too with a military that has spent many years preparing for a U.S. invasion. It's a formidable force."

Conceding that the United States could beat Iran, Carlson discussed other problems that the United States would encounter if war came. "Compared to 2003, our country is deeper in debt and far more politically divided than it's been since the Civil War. Our military is overstretched.... Meanwhile, China is much stronger than it was 15 years ago. You can bet the Chinese military will be far more assertive than ever when we are tied down in yet another quagmire."

Finally, Carlson concluded his monologue, "If there was a swamp in Washington, you're looking at it, the foreign policy establishment. They are working overtime to ensnare the president in a mess in Iran. Let's hope that he understands exactly what's going on."

If Carlson's private conversations with Trump were anything like this strong monologue, perhaps he did tip the scales against a military assault upon Iran. If so, it would be ironic, because during the Bush administration, Fox News was all-in on attacking Iraq. Apparently, Carlson's fellow Fox commentator, Sean Hannity, is still geared up for a military retaliation. Following Carlson's Thursday night show, in which Carlson lamented the apparent "[hunger for war](#)" that some in and out of the Trump administration have, Hannity began his program promising that Trump "will bomb the Hell out of Iran."

Those who like Trump's "America First" and non-interventionist stances of 2016 should hope that he watches Carlson's show more than Hannity's.

Image of Tucker Carlson: [Screenshot of a Fox News Youtube video](#)

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