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Gen. Wesley Clark Weighs Presidential Bid: "I Think About It Everyday"

We spend the hour with General Wesley Clark, the retired four-star general. He was the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO during the Kosovo War. In 2004 he unsuccessfully ran for the Democratic presidential nomination. Clark talks about his opposition to a U.S. attack on Iran; the impeachment of President Bush; the use of cluster bombs; the bombing of Radio Television Serbia in the Kosovo War under his command; US service members refusing deployments to Iraq; his own presidential ambitions and much more. [includes rush transcript]

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Well for the rest of the hour we are going to hear General Wesley Clark on the possibility of a U.S. attack on Iran, the impeachment of President Bush, the use of cluster bombs, the bombing of Radio Television Serbia during the Kosovo War and much more. I interviewed Wesley Clark on Tuesday at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

- **Gen. Wesley Clark.** Retired 4-star US Army general. Supreme Allied Commander of NATO during the Kosovo War.

RUSH TRANSCRIPT

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AMY GOODMAN: Today, an exclusive hour with General Wesley Clark, the retired four-star general. He was Supreme Allied Commander of NATO during the Kosovo War. He has been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2004, he unsuccessfully ran for the Democratic presidential nomination. He recently edited a series of books about famous US generals, including Dwight Eisenhower and Ulysses Grant, both of whom became president after their military careers ended.

On Tuesday, I interviewed Wesley Clark at the 92nd Street Y Cultural Center here in New York City before a live audience and asked him about his presidential ambitions.

AMY GOODMAN: What do you think of these generals who run for president?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I like them. It's happened before.

AMY GOODMAN: Will it happen again?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: It might.

AMY GOODMAN: Later in the interview, I followed up on that question.

AMY GOODMAN: Will you announce for president?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I haven't said I won't.

AMY GOODMAN: What are you waiting for?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I'm waiting for several different preconditions, which I'm not at liberty to discuss. But I will tell you this: I think about it every single day.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, for the rest of the hour, we'll hear General Wesley Clark in his own words on the possibility of a US attack on Iran; the impeachment of President Bush; the use of cluster bombs; the bombing of Radio Television Serbia during the Kosovo War under his command; and much more. I interviewed General Clark on Tuesday at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

AMY GOODMAN: Now, let's talk about Iran. You have a whole website devoted to stopping war.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: www.stopiranwar.com.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you see a replay in what happened in the lead-up to the war with Iraq — the allegations of the weapons of mass destruction, the media leaping onto the bandwagon?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, in a way. But, you know, history doesn't repeat itself exactly twice. What I did warn about when I testified in front of Congress in 2002, I said if you want to worry about a state, it shouldn't be Iraq, it should be Iran. But this government, our administration, wanted to worry about Iraq, not Iran.

I knew why, because I had been through the Pentagon right after 9/11. About ten days after 9/11, I went through the Pentagon and I saw Secretary Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz. I went downstairs just to say hello to some of the people on the Joint Staff who used to work for me, and one of the generals called me in. He said, "Sir, you've got to come in and talk to me a second." I said, "Well, you're too busy." He said, "No, no." He says, "We've made the decision we're going to war with Iraq." This was on or about the 20th of September. I said, "We're going to war with Iraq? Why?" He said, "I don't know." He said, "I guess they don't know what else to do." So I said, "Well, did they find some information connecting Saddam to al-Qaeda?" He said, "No, no." He says, "There's nothing new that way. They just made the decision to go to war with Iraq." He said, "I guess it's like we don't know what to do about terrorists, but we've got a good military and we can take down governments." And he said, "I guess if the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem has to look like a nail."

So I came back to see him a few weeks later, and by that time we were bombing in Afghanistan. I said, "Are we still going to war with Iraq?" And he said, "Oh, it's worse than that." He reached over on his desk. He picked up a piece of paper. And he said, "I just got this down from upstairs" — meaning the Secretary of Defense's office — "today." And

he said, "This is a memo that describes how we're going to take out seven countries in five years, starting with Iraq, and then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and, finishing off, Iran." I said, "Is it classified?" He said, "Yes, sir." I said, "Well, don't show it to me." And I saw him a year or so ago, and I said, "You remember that?" He said, "Sir, I didn't show you that memo! I didn't show it to you!"

AMY GOODMAN: I'm sorry. What did you say his name was?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I'm not going to give you his name.

AMY GOODMAN: So, go through the countries again.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, starting with Iraq, then Syria and Lebanon, then Libya, then Somalia and Sudan, and back to Iran. So when you look at Iran, you say, "Is it a replay?" It's not exactly a replay. But here's the truth: that Iran, from the beginning, has seen that the presence of the United States in Iraq was a threat — a blessing, because we took out Saddam Hussein and the Baathists. They couldn't handle them. We took care of it for them. But also a threat, because they knew that they were next on the hit list. And so, of course, they got engaged. They lost a million people during the war with Iraq, and they've got a long and unprotectable, unsecurable border. So it was in their vital interest to be deeply involved inside Iraq. They tolerated our attacks on the Baathists. They were happy we captured Saddam Hussein.

But they're building up their own network of influence, and to cement it, they occasionally give some military assistance and training and advice, either directly or indirectly, to both the insurgents and to the militias. And in that sense, it's not exactly parallel, because there has been, I believe, continuous Iranian engagement, some of it legitimate, some of it illegitimate. I mean, you can hardly fault Iran because they're offering to do eye operations for Iraqis who need medical attention. That's not an offense that you can go to war over, perhaps. But it is an effort to gain influence.

And the administration has stubbornly refused to talk with Iran about their perception, in part because they don't want to pay the price with their domestic — our US domestic political base, the rightwing base, but also because they don't want to legitimate a government that they've been trying to overthrow. If you were Iran, you'd probably believe that you were mostly already at war with the United States anyway, since we've asserted that their government needs regime change, and we've asked congress to appropriate \$75 million to do it, and we are supporting terrorist groups, apparently, who are infiltrating and blowing up things inside Iraq — Iran. And if we're not doing it, let's put it this way: we're probably cognizant of it and encouraging it. So it's not surprising that we're moving to a point of confrontation and crisis with Iran.

My point on this is not that the Iranians are good guys — they're not — but that you shouldn't use force, except as a last, last, last resort. There is a military option, but it's a bad one.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to get your response to Seymour Hersh's piece in *The New Yorker* to two key points this week, reporting the Pentagon's established a special planning group within the office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to plan a bombing attack on Iran, that this is coming as the Bush administration and Saudi Arabia are pumping

money for covert operations into many areas of the Middle East, including Lebanon, Syria, and Iran, in an effort to strengthen Saudi-supported Sunni Islam groups and weaken Iranian-backed Shias — some of the covert money has been given to jihadist groups in Lebanon with ties to al-Qaeda — fighting the Shias by funding with Prince Bandar and then with US money not approved by Congress, funding the Sunnis connected to al-Qaeda.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I don't have any direct information to confirm it or deny it. It's certainly plausible. The Saudis have taken a more active role. You know, the Saudis have —

AMY GOODMAN: You were just in Saudi Arabia.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Hmm?

AMY GOODMAN: You just came back from Saudi Arabia.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Yeah. Well, the Saudis have basically recognized that they have an enormous stake in the outcome in Iraq, and they don't particularly trust the judgment of the United States in this area. We haven't exactly proved our competence in Iraq. So they're trying to take matters into their own hands.

The real danger is, and one of the reasons this is so complicated is because — let's say we did follow the desires of some people who say, "Just pull out, and pull out now." Well, yeah. We could mechanically do that. It would be ugly, and it might take three or four months, but you could line up the battalions on the road one by one, and you could put the gunners in the Humvees and load and cock their weapons and shoot their way out of Iraq. You'd have a few roadside bombs. But if you line everybody up there won't be any roadside bombs. Maybe some sniping. You can fly helicopters over, do your air cover. You'd probably get safely out of there. But when you leave, the Saudis have got to find someone to fight the Shias. Who are they going to find? Al-Qaeda, because the groups of Sunnis who would be extremists and willing to fight would probably be the groups connected to al-Qaeda. So one of the weird inconsistencies in this is that were we to get out early, we'd be intensifying the threat against us of a super powerful Sunni extremist group, which was now legitimated by overt Saudi funding in an effort to hang onto a toehold inside Iraq and block Iranian expansionism.

AMY GOODMAN: And interestingly, today, John Negroponte has just become the number two man, resigning his post as National Intelligence Director to go to the State Department, Seymour Hersh says, because of his discomfort that the administration's covert actions in the Middle East so closely echo the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, and Negroponte was involved with that.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I'm sure there are a lot of reasons why John would go back to the State Department. John's a good — he's a good man. But, you know, the question is, in government is, can you — are you bigger than your job? Because if you're not bigger than your job, you get trapped by the pressures of events and processes into going along with actions that you know you shouldn't. And I don't know. I don't know why he left the National Intelligence Director's position. He started in the State Department. Maybe he's got a fondness to return and finish off his career in State.

AMY GOODMAN: Can you talk about — do you know who the generals are, who are threatening to resign if the United States attacks Iran?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: No, I don't. No, I don't. And I don't want to know.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you agree with them?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I'll put it this way. On Labor Day weekend of 1994, when I was the J5 — I was a three-star general. I was in the Pentagon. And it was a Saturday morning, and so I was in the office. Walt Kross was the director of the Joint Staff, and he was in the office. And I think it was either Howell Estes or Jack Sheehan who was the J3 at the time. The three of us — I think it was Jack still on the job for the last couple of days. And the three of us were in Shalikashvili's office about 11:00 in the morning on a Saturday morning, and he had just come back from a White House meeting. And he was all fired up in the way that Shali could be. And he said, "So," he said, "we will see who will be the real soldiers this weekend! There's much work to be done! This operation on Haiti has to be completed! The planning must be done correctly, and it must be done this weekend! So we will see who are the real soldiers!"

Then the phone buzzed, and he got up from this little round table the four of us were sitting at to take the call from the White House. We started looking at each other. We said, "Gosh, I wonder where this came from." I mean, we were all getting ready to check out of the building in an hour or so. We had finished off the messages and paperwork. And we just usually got together because there was normally a crisis every Saturday anyway, and so we normally would come in for the Saturday morning crisis. And so, Shali came back, and so I said to him, I said, "Well, sir, we've been talking amongst ourselves, and we're happy to work all weekend to get all this done, but this is just a drill, right, on Haiti?"

He looked at me, and he said, "Wes," he said, "this is no drill." He said, "I'm not authorized to tell you this. But," he said "the decision has been made, and the United States will invade Haiti. The date is the 20th" — I think it was this date — "of the 20th of September. And the planning must be done, and it must be done now. And if any of you have reservations about this, this is the time to leave." So I looked at Jack, and I looked at Walt. They looked at me. I mean, we kind of shrugged our shoulders and said, "OK, if you want to invade Haiti, I mean, it's not illegal. It's not the country we'd most like to invade. The opposition there consists of five armored vehicles. But sure, I mean, if the President says to do it, yeah, we're not going resign over it." And so, we didn't resign. Nobody resigned.

But Shali was a very smart man. He knew. He knew he was bigger than his job, and he knew that you had to ask yourself the moral, legal and ethical questions first. And so, I'm encouraged by the fact that some of these generals have said this about Iran. They should be asking these questions first.

AMY GOODMAN: General Wesley Clark. He says he thinks about running for president again every day. We'll come back to my interview with him in a minute.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: We go back to my interview with General Wesley Clark.

AMY GOODMAN: What about the soldiers who are saying no to going to Iraq right now?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Iraq?

AMY GOODMAN: To going to Iraq. People like First Lieutenant Ehren Watada, first commissioned officer to say no to deploy. And they just declared a mistrial in his court-martial. He will face another court-martial in a few weeks. What do you think of these young men and women — there are now thousands — who are refusing? But, for example, Ehren Watada, who says he feels it's wrong. He feels it's illegal and immoral, and he doesn't want to lead men and women there.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I think, you know, he's certainly made a personally courageous statement. And he'll pay with the consequences of it.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think he should have to go to jail for that?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I think that you have to have an effective armed forces. And I think that it's not up to the men and women in the Armed Forces to choose where they'll go to war, because at the very time you need the Armed Forces the most is — there will be a certain number of people who will see it the other way. And so, I support his right to refuse to go, and I support the government's effort to bring charges against him. This is the way the system works.

Now, the difference is, the case that I described with Shalikhshvili is, we would have been given the chance to retire. We would have left our jobs. We might not have retired as three-star generals, because we hadn't done our duty. But we weren't in the same circumstance that he is, so there wasn't necessarily going to be charges brought against us.

But an armed forces has to have discipline. It's a voluntary organization to join. But it's not voluntary unless it's illegal. And you can bring — the trouble with Iraq is it's not illegal. It was authorized by the United States Congress. It was authorized by the United Nations Security Council resolution. It's an illegitimate war, but not an illegal war.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think it's wrong?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: It's wrong to fight in Iraq? Well, I think it's a mistake. I think it's a bad strategy. I think it's brought us a lot of grief, and it will bring us a lot more grief. I think it's been a tremendous distraction from the war on terror, a diversion of resources, and it's reinforced our enemies. But on the other hand, his case is a moral case, not a legal case. And if you're going to be a conscientious objector morally like this, then what makes it commendable is that you'll take your stand on principle and pay the price. If there's no price to be paid for it, then the courage of your act isn't self-evident. So he's taken a very personally courageous stand. But on the other hand, you have to also appreciate the fact that the Armed Forces has to be able to function.

So, you know, in World War I in France, there were a series of terribly misplaced offensives, and they brought — they failed again and again and again. The French took incredible losses. And these were conscript armies. And after one of these failures, a group of thousands of soldiers simply said, "We're not doing this again. It's wrong." You know what the French did? They did what they call decimation. They lined up the

troops. They took every tenth soldier, and they shot them. Now, the general who ordered that, he suffered some severe repercussions, personally, morally, but after that the soldiers in France didn't disobey. Had the army disintegrated at that point, Germany would have occupied France. So when you're dealing with the use of force, there is an element of compulsion in the Armed Forces.

AMY GOODMAN: But if the politicians will not stop it — as you pointed out, the Democrats joined with the Republicans in authorizing the war — then it's quite significant, I think, that you, as a general, are saying that this man has taken a courageous act. Then it's up to the people who are being sent to go to say no.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Yeah. But the courage that we need is not his courage. We need the courage of the leaders in the United States government: the generals who could affect the policy, the people in Congress who could force the President to change his strategy. That's the current — that's the courage that's needed.

AMY GOODMAN: And how could they do that?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, you start with a non-binding resolution in the United States Congress, and you build your momentum from there. And you keep hammering it. The Congress has three principal powers. It has the power to appoint, power to investigate, power to fund. And you go after all three. On all three fronts, you find out what the President needs, until he takes it seriously. I think it's a difficult maneuver to use a scalpel and say, "Well, we're going to support funding, but we're not going to support funding for the surge," because that's requiring a degree of micro-management that Congress can't do.

But you can certainly put enough squeeze on the President that he finally calls in the leaders of the Congress and says, "OK, OK, what's it going to take? I've got to get my White House budget passed. I've got to get thirty judges, federal judges, confirmed. I've got to get these federal prosecutors — you know, the ones that I caused to resign so I could handle it — they've got to get replacements in place. What do I have to do to get some support here?" I mean, it could be done. It's hard bare-knuckle government.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think Congress should stop funding the war?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I think Congress should take a strong stand to get the strategy changed. I don't think that if you cut off funding for the war, it's in the — right now that's not in the United States' interest. What is in the United States' interest is to change the strategy in the war. You cannot succeed by simply stopping the funding and saying, "You've got six months to get the Americans out." That's not going to end the misery in Iraq. It's not going to restore the lives that have been lost. And it's not going to give us the power in the region to prevent later threats.

What we do have to do is have a strategy that uses all the elements of America's power: diplomatic, economic, legal and military. I would send a high-level diplomatic team into the region right now. I'd have no-holds-barred and no-preconditioned discussion with Iran and Syria. And I would let it be known that I've got in my bag all the tricks, including putting another 50,000 troops in Iraq and pulling all 150,000 troops out. And we're going to reach an agreement on a statement of principles that brings stability and peace and order to the region. So let's just sit

down and start doing it. Now, that could be done with the right administrative leadership. It just hasn't been done.

You know, think of it this way. You're on a ship crossing the Atlantic. It's a new ship. And it's at night. And you're looking out ahead of the ship, and you notice that there's a part of the horizon. It's a beautiful, starry night, except that there's a part of the horizon, a sort of a regular hump out there where there are no stars visible. And you notice, as the ship plows through the water at thirty knots, that this area where there are no stars is getting larger. And finally, it hits you that there must be something out there that's blocking the starlight, like an iceberg. So you run to the captain. And you say, "Captain, captain, there's an iceberg, and we're driving right toward it." And he says, "Look, I can't be bothered with the iceberg right now. We're having an argument about the number of deck chairs on the fore deck versus the aft deck." And you say, "But you're going to hit an iceberg." He says, "I'm sorry. Get out of here." So you go to the first officer, and he says, "I'm fighting with the captain on the number of deck chairs."

You know, we're approaching an iceberg in the Middle East in our policy, and we've got Congress and the United States — and the President of the United States fighting over troop strength in Iraq. It's the wrong issue. The issue is the strategy, not the troop strength.

AMY GOODMAN: General Clark, do you think Guantanamo Bay should be closed?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Absolutely.

AMY GOODMAN: If Congress cut off funds for the prison there, it would be closed. Should they?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I think the first thing Congress should do is repeal the Military Commissions Act. I'm very disturbed that a number of people who are looking at the highest office in the land have supported an act which advertently or inadvertently authorizes the admission into evidence of information gained through torture. That's not the America that I believe in. And the America that I believe in doesn't detain people indefinitely without charges. So I'd start with the Military Commissions Act.

Then I'd get our NATO allies into the act. They've said they don't like Guantanamo either. So I'd like to create an international tribunal, not a kangaroo court of military commissions. And let's go back through the evidence. And let's lay it out. Who are these people that have been held down there? And what have they been held for? And which ones can be released? And which ones should be tried in court and convicted?

You see, essentially, you cannot win the war on terror by military force. It is first and foremost a battle of ideas. It is secondly a law enforcement effort and a cooperative effort among nations. And only as a last resort do you use military force. This president has distorted the capabilities of the United States Armed Forces. He's used our men and women in uniform improperly in Guantanamo and engaged in actions that I think are totally against the Uniform Code of Military Justice and against what we stand for as the American people.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think that President Bush should be impeached?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I think we ought to do first thing's first, which is, we really need to understand and finish the job that Congress started with respect to the Iraq war investigation. Do you remember that there was going to be a study released by the Senate, that the senator from Iowa or from Kansas who was the Republican head of the Senate Intelligence Committee was going to do this study to determine whether the administration had, in fact, misused the intelligence information to mislead us into the war with Iraq? Well, I've never seen that study. I'd like to know where that study is. I'd like to know why we've spent three years investigating Scooter Libby, when we should have been investigating why this country went to war in Iraq.

AMY GOODMAN: The Center for Constitutional Rights has filed a complaint against Donald Rumsfeld, General Miller and others in a German court, because they have universal jurisdiction. Do you think that Donald Rumsfeld should be tried for war crimes?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I'd like to see what the evidence is against Rumsfeld. I do know this, that there was a lot of pressure put on the men and women in uniform to come up with intelligence. I remember — I think it was either General Sanchez or General Abizaid, who stated that we don't need more troops — this is the fall of 2003 — we just need better information. Well, to me, that was immediate code words that we were really trying to soak these people for information.

And it's only a short step from there to all the kinds of mistreatment that occur at places like Abu Ghraib. So we know that Al Gonzales wrote a couple of really — or authored, or his people authored and he approved, a couple of outrageous memos that attempted to define torture as deliberately inflicted pain, the equivalent of the loss of a major bodily organ or limb, which is — it's not an adequate definition of torture. And we know that he authorized, to some degree, some coercive methods, which we have — and we know President Bush himself accepted implicitly in a signing statement to a 2005 act on military detainees that he would use whatever methods were appropriate or necessary. So there's been some official condoning of these actions.

I think it's a violation of international law and a violation of American law and a violation of the principles of good government in America. There have always been evidences of mistreatment of prisoners. Every army has probably done it in history. But our country hasn't ever done it as a matter of deliberate policy. George Washington told his soldiers, when they captured the Hessians and the men wanted to run them through, because the Hessians were brutal and ruthless, he said, "No, treat them well." He said, "They'll join our side." And many of them did. It was a smart policy, not only the right thing to do, but a smart policy to treat the enemy well. We've made countless enemies in that part of the world by the way we've treated people and disregarded them. It's bad, bad policy.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to ask — you're a FOX News contributor now?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Oh, at least.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to ask you what you think of the dean of West Point, Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, together with a military interrogator named Tony Lagouranis and the group Human Rights First,

going to the heads of the program *24*, very popular hit show on FOX, to tell them that what they're doing on this program, glorifying torture, is inspiring young men and women to go to Iraq and torture soldiers there, and to stop it?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: And not only that, but it doesn't work. Yeah, Pat Finnegan is one of my heroes.

AMY GOODMAN: So what do you think about that?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I think it's great.

AMY GOODMAN: And have you been involved in the conversation internally at FOX, which runs *24*, to stop it?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, as far as I know, they actually put out a call to all the writers in Hollywood. My son's a writer, and he was one of them who got a call. They were all told: stop talking about torture. It doesn't work. So I think it was an effective move by Pat Finnegan.

AMY GOODMAN: So you support it?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Absolutely.

AMY GOODMAN: General Wesley Clark. I'm interviewing him at the 92nd Street Y. We're going to come back to the conclusion of that interview in a minute.

[break]

AMY GOODMAN: General Wesley Clark recently edited a series of books about famous US generals: Grant, LeMay, Patton and Eisenhower. When I interviewed him at the 92nd Street Y, I asked him a question about the presidency of General Dwight Eisenhower

AMY GOODMAN: 1953 was also a seminal date for today, and that was when Kermit Roosevelt, the grandson of Teddy Roosevelt, went to Iran and led a coup against Mohammed Mossadegh under Eisenhower.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: People make mistakes. And one of the mistakes that the United States consistently made was that it could intervene and somehow adjust people's governments, especially in the Middle East. I don't know why we felt that — you can understand Latin America, because Latin America was always an area in which people would come to the United States, say, "You've got to help us down there. These are banditos, and they don't know anything. And, you know, they don't have a government. Just intervene and save our property." And the United States did it a lot in the '20s. Of course, Eisenhower was part of that culture. He had seen it.

But in the Middle East, we had never been there. We established a relationship during World War II, of course, to keep the Germans out of Iran. And so, the Soviets and the Brits put an Allied mission together. At the end of World War II, the Soviets didn't want to withdraw, and Truman called their bluff in the United Nations. And Eisenhower knew all of this. And Iran somehow became incorporated into the American defense perimeter. And so, his view would have been, we couldn't allow a communist to take over.

AMY GOODMAN: But wasn't it more about British Petroleum?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Oh, it's always — there are always interests. The truth is, about the Middle East is, had there been no oil there, it would be like Africa. Nobody is threatening to intervene in Africa. The problem is the opposite. We keep asking for people to intervene and stop it. There's no question that the presence of petroleum throughout the region has sparked great power involvement. Whether that was the specific motivation for the coup or not, I can't tell you. But there was definitely — there's always been this attitude that somehow we could intervene and use force in the region. I mean, that was true with — I mean, imagine us arming and creating the Mujahideen to keep the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Why would we think we could do that? But we did. And, you know, my lesson on it is, whenever you use force, there are unintended consequences, so you should use force as a last resort. Whether it's overt or covert, you pay enormous consequences for using force.

AMY GOODMAN: I wanted to ask you about what you think of the response to Jimmy Carter's book, *Peace, Not Apartheid*.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I'm sorry to say I haven't read the book. And it's one of the things I've been meaning to read, and I just haven't. I will tell you this, that we're in a very, very difficult position in Israel. I say "we," because every American president has committed to the protection and survival of the state of Israel. And I think that's right. And I certainly feel that way, and I'm a very strong supporter of Israel.

But somehow we've got to move off top dead center in terms of these discussions with the Palestinians. And this administration has failed to lead. They came into office basically determined not to do anything that Bill Clinton did. I think that was the basic guideline. And so, they have allowed unremitting violence between Israel and the Palestinians with hardly an effort to stop that through US leadership. And now, it's almost too late. So Condi was over there the other day, and she didn't achieve what she wanted to achieve, and people want to blame the Saudis. But at least the Saudis tried to do something at Mecca by putting together a unity government. So I fault the administration.

Jimmy Carter has taken a lot of heat from people. I don't know exactly what he said in the book. But people are very sensitive about Israel in this country. And I understand that. A lot of my friends have explained it to me and have explained to me the psychology of people who were in this country and saw what was happening in World War II, and maybe they didn't feel like they spoke out strongly enough, soon enough, to stop it. And it's not going to happen again.

AMY GOODMAN: General Clark, I wanted to ask you a tough question about journalists.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, now, that would be the first tough question you've asked me tonight.

AMY GOODMAN: There are more than a hundred journalists and media workers in Iraq who have died. And particularly hard hit are Arab journalists. I mean, you had Tariq Ayoub, the Al Jazeera reporter, who died on the roof of Al Jazeera when the US military shelled Al Jazeera, then went on to shell the Palestine Hotel and killed two reporters, a Reuters cameraman and one from Telecinco in Spain named Jose Couso. Many Arab journalists feel like they have been targeted, the idea of shooting the messenger. But this tough question goes back to your

being Supreme Allied Commander in Yugoslavia and the bombing of Radio Television Serbia. Do you regret that that happened, that you did that?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: No, I don't regret that at all. That was part of the Serb command and control network. And not only that, I was asked to take out that television by a lot of important political leaders. And before I took it out, I twice warned the Serbs we were going to take it out. We stopped, at one news conference in the Pentagon, we planted the question to get the attention of the Serbs, that we were going to target Serb Radio and Television.

AMY GOODMAN: RTS.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Yeah. And that night, in fact, Milosevic got the warning, because he summoned all the foreign journalists to come to a special mandatory party at RTS that night. But we weren't bombing that night. We put the word out twice before we actually I did it.

AMY GOODMAN: You told CNN, which was also there, to leave?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: I told — I used — I think I used CNN to plant the story and to leak it at the Pentagon press conference. But we didn't tell anyone specifically to leave. What we told them was it's now a target. And it was Milosevic who determined that he would keep people there in the middle of the night just so there would be someone killed if we struck it. So we struck it during the hours where there were not supposed to be anybody there.

AMY GOODMAN: But you killed civilians.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Six people died.

AMY GOODMAN: I think sixteen. But I think it's the media — it's the beauticians, the technicians. It was a civilian target.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Yeah, they were ordered to stay there by Milosevic. Yeah.

AMY GOODMAN: But it was a civilian target.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: It was not a civilian target. It was a military target. It was part of the Serb command and control network

AMY GOODMAN: What do you think of Amnesty International calling it a war crime?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, I think it was investigated by the International Criminal Tribunal in Yugoslavia and found to be a legitimate target. So I think it's perfectly alright for Amnesty International to have their say, but everything we did was approved by lawyers, and every target was blessed. We would not have committed a war crime.

AMY GOODMAN: Upon reflection now and knowing who died there, the young people, the people who worked for RTS, who — as you said, if Milosevic wanted people to stay there, they were just following orders.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, it was a tragedy. But I'll tell you something. If you want to talk about tragedies, how about this one? We bombed what we thought was a Serb police station in Kosovo. We saw

the Serb vehicles. We flew unmanned aerial vehicles over it. And we did everything we could to identify it. And we found that there were Serb police vehicles parked there at night, so we sent an F-16 in, dropped two 500-pound laser-guided bombs and took it out. We killed eighty Albanians who had been imprisoned by the Serbs there. They were trying to escape, and the Serbs locked them up in this farmhouse and surrounded them with vehicles. So, I regret every single innocent person who died, and I prayed every night that there wouldn't be any innocent people who died. But this is why I say you must use force only as a last resort.

I told this story to the high school kids earlier, but it bears repeating, I guess. We had a malfunction with a cluster bomb unit, and a couple of grenades fell on a schoolyard, and some, I think three, schoolchildren were killed in Nish. And two weeks later, I got a letter from a Serb grandfather. He said, "You've killed my granddaughter." He said, "I hate you for this, and I'll kill you." And I got this in the middle of the war. And it made me very, very sad. We certainly never wanted to do anything like that. But in war, accidents happen. And that's why you shouldn't undertake military operations unless every other alternative has been exhausted, because innocent people do die. And I think the United States military was as humane and careful as it possibly could have been in the Kosovo campaign. But still, civilians died. And I'll always regret that.

AMY GOODMAN: Do you think cluster bombs should be banned?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: You know, we used, I think 1,400-plus cluster bombs. And there's a time when you have to use cluster bombs: when they're the most appropriate and humane weapon. But I think you have to control the use very carefully. And I think we did in Yugoslavia.

AMY GOODMAN: Right now, the US has rejected an international call to ban the use of cluster bombs. On Friday, forty-six countries were in Oslo to develop a new international treaty to ban the use of cluster munitions by — I think it's 2008. Would you support that?

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Well, you know, people who are against war often make the case by trying to attack the weapons of war and stripping away the legitimacy of those weapons. I've participated in some of that. I'd like to get rid of landmines. I did participate in getting rid of laser blinding weapons. And I was part of the team that put together the agreement that got rid of laser blinding weapons. I'd like to get rid of nuclear weapons. But I can't agree with those who say that force has no place in international affairs. It simply does for this country. And I would like to work to make it so that it doesn't. But the truth is, for now it does. And so, I can't go against giving our men and women in uniform the appropriate weapons they need to fight, to fight effectively to succeed on the battlefield, and to minimize their own casualties.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, we'll have to leave it there. I thank you very much, General Wesley Clark.

GEN. WESLEY CLARK: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

AMY GOODMAN: General Wesley Clark. I interviewed him at the 92nd Street Y, the cultural center here in New York, on the publication of the Great General Series, on Grant, LeMay, Patton and Eisenhower.



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