STEPHEN MILLER'S PRESUMED BABYSITTING OF JD VANCE'S EUROPEAN ANIMOSITY ... AND DOD'S POTENTIAL WAR CRIMES

Tulsi Gabbard's testimony at the threat hearings was clear: After falsely claiming that fentanyl was the top threat to the United States, she said the second threat was China. That's important background to the most interesting comment I've seen about the chat.

The Trumpsters on the chat were obsessed with making Europe pay for the operation. But — as Nathalie Tocci noted in this NYT story focused on the Trumpsters' obsession — the entire conversation ignored the import to China of transit through the Suez Canal.

"It is clear that the trans-Atlantic relationship, as was, is over, and there is, at best, an indifferent disdain," said Nathalie Tocci, director of Italy's Institute of International Affairs, who formerly advised a top E.U. official. "And at worst, and closer to that, there is an active attempt to undermine Europe."

[snip]

He and others, like Anna Sauerbrey, the foreign editor of Die Zeit, noted that the explicit demand for payment, rather than just political and military support, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, was new. And it ignored the fact that "the U.S. depends on global trade," she said, and that "France, Britain and the Netherlands have deployed ships to the region" for the same purpose. The

Americans, she said, "are constantly overlooking European efforts."

China, for example, gets most of its oil imports through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait and does much of its export trade with Europe through the same sea route. But no one is asking China to pay, Ms. Tocci noted.

In the texts released by Atlantic, there's actually even more focus on the trade that transits the canal than the original story.

Indeed, it was at the center of debates over whether the strikes should go forward, which decision Tulsi Gabbard claimed had been made long before the chat started, and which debate, in yesterday's cover story, was hailed as a policy process working.

Eleven minutes after Mike Waltz kicks off the thread with instructions that Joint Staff is sending "a more specific sequence of events in the coming days," JD Vance piped in to say he thought the strikes were a mistake.

He focused on the fact that (he claimed) just 3% of US trade goes through Bab el-Mandeb, whereas 40% of Europe's does.

Today

JD Vance

Team, I am out for the day doing an economic event in Michigan. But I think we are making a mistake.

3 percent of US trade runs through the suez. 40 percent of European trade does. There is a real risk that the public doesn't understand this or why it's necessary.

The strongest reason to do this is, as POTUS said, to send a message. But I am not sure the president is aware how inconsistent this is with his message on Europe right now. There's a further risk that we see a moderate to severe spike in oil prices.

I am willing to support the consensus of the team and keep these concerns to myself. But there is a strong argument for delaying this a month, doing the messaging work on why this matters, seeing where the economy is, etc.

8:16 AM ①

JV

Both Joe Kent (Tulsi's unconfirmed aide) and John Ratcliffe respond that they could wait; indeed, in an arguably classified text, Ratcliffe says that more time would "be used to identify better starting points for coverage on Houthi leadership." Kent also offers to provide unclassified details on shipping, perhaps to correct JD's claim.

Remember, the person most likely to have been the "JG" whom Waltz tried to add to the chat instead of Jeff Goldberg is Jamieson Greer, Trump's trade representative, who likely would have had the precise details (and also might be sufficiently grown up to point out how stupid this Signal chat was).

Then Pete Hegseth pipes up to second JD's specific concerns about messaging, including his worry that (ha!) the plans will leak and "we

look indecisive."

Waltz responds to JD's original point, correcting him about how much US traffic transits Bab el-Mandeb, accounting for the fact that the stuff transiting the canal ends up in trade with the US.

Michael Waltz

The trade figures we have are 15% of global and 30% of container. It's difficult to break that down to US. Specific because much of the container either going through the red sea still or around the Cape of Good Hope our components going to Europe that turns into manufactured goods for transatlantic trade to the United States.

Whether we pull the plug or not today European navies do not have the capability to defend against the types of sophisticated, antiship, cruise missiles, and drones the Houthis are now using. So whether it's now or several weeks from now, it will have to be the United States that reopens these shipping lanes. Per the president's request we are working with DOD and State to determine how to compile the cost associated and levy them on the Europeans.



M

That's the first 27 minutes of the substantive discussion. Somewhere between 8:32 and 8:42AM, Waltz adds "SM," believed to be Stephen Miller.

After adding Miller (but without mentioning he added him), Waltz returns to the issue of sea lanes, asserting that unless the US reopens them, they won't get reopened.

Michael Waltz

As we stated in the in the first PC we have a fundamental decision of allowing the sea lanes to remain closed or to reopen them now or later, we are the only ones with the capability unfortunately.

From a messaging standpoint we absolutely ad this to of horribles on why the Europeans must invest in their defense.

8:42 AM ①



JD Vance

@Pete Hegseth if you think we should do it let's go.

I just hate bailing Europe out again.

8:45 AM ①

Let's just make sure our messaging is tight here. And if there are things we can do upfront to minimize risk to Saudi oil facilities we should do it.

8:46 AM (1)



Pete Hegseth

VP: I fully share your loathing of European free-loading. It's PATHETIC.

But Mike is correct, we are the only ones on the planet (on our side of the ledger) who can do this. Nobody else even close. Question is timing. I feel like now is as good a time as any, given POTUS directive to reopen shipping lanes. I think we should go; but POTUS still retains 24 hours of decision space.



8:49 AM ①

JD suggests that if Hegseth is okay with the strikes, "let's go." He suggests Houthi targeting of Saudi oil facilities are one downside risk, not Saudi involvement, which is why the US has often chosen to lead on Houthi strikes.

Then Hegseth agrees that the Europeans are "free-loading It's PATHETIC," and says "we are

the only ones on the planet (on our side of the ledger) who can" reopen the shipping lanes — which may suggest he believes China could do it too.

As Tocci pointed out to NYT, there's no discussion of asking China to pay for these strikes. No discussion of how doing so for China helps China build its influence in Europe. No discussion at all in how this might affect China.

These boys purportedly intent on confronting China simply don't consider the policy decision's affect on China. JD and Whiskey Pete, at least, are interested primarily in hurting Europe.

Another 46 minutes elapse before SM — added after JD was wailing about the Europeans — comments. He offers an interpretation of what Trump said: a green light on the operation, he opines, but the US would harass Egypt and Europe after the fact to extort a payback.

Eleven minutes later, Hegseth — the guy to whom JD appealed on this issue — agreed with SM's interpretation of the President's intent.

SM

As I heard it, the president was clear: green light, but we soon make clear to Egypt and Europe what we expect in return. We also need to figure out how to enforce such a requirement. EG, if Europe doesn't remunerate, then what? If the US successfully restores freedom of navigation at great cost there needs to be some further economic gain extracted in return.



9:35 AM ①



Pete Hegseth

Agree 9:46 AM ①

Pete Hegseth
TEAM UPDATE:

That settled it. As I noted, SM's — presumed to be Stephen Miller, Trump's top *domestic* policy advisor — interpretation of the President's intent is the sole backup in this now public document that the President authorized the strike at all: "As I heard it, the president was clear: green light."

And the next thing we know, after Waltz resets how long until this PRA/FRA-covered communications will be destroyed illegally — DOD is flattening the apartment of someone's girlfriend.

Michael Waltz set disappearing message time to 4 weeks.
 Michael Waltz
 VP. building collapsed. Had multiple positive ID. Pete, Kurilla, the IC, amazing job.

New Messages

JV What? 12m ① Michael Waltz Typing too fast. The first target - their top missile guy - we had positive ID of him walking into his girlfriend's building and it's now collapsed. JD Vance Excellent 5m ① Michael Waltz Michael Waltz

Fist-flag-fire!

By March 17, locals in Sanaa were claiming 53 people had been killed in this and ensuing strikes, including five children.

Even ignoring the foreknowledge of a civilian target, that makes the whole thing legally precarious, because everyone on the list is relying on SM's interpretation of presidential intent. With the foreknowledge, it puts everyone involved in the strike at much greater legal risk because the legality of it, seemingly a target with significant civilian exposure, is so fragile.

But the other thing it does is show SM — again, believed to be Trump's top *domestic* policy advisor — serving as the surrogate for Trump, and doing so in a way designed to shut JD up.

Like wormtongue, his mere gloss of the leader's intent is treated with uncontested authority.