

Has the CIA's Plot to "Covertly" Kill Russians in Syria Come to Pass?

By [The New Atlas](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#), [USA](#)

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In-depth Report: [SYRIA](#)

Former acting director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Michael Morell during a televised interview with American talk show host Charlie Rose, openly conspired to commit a raft of war crimes in Syria, suggesting that the US should take measures to "covertly" kill Russians and Iranians through armed proxies on the ground.

He also suggested targeting Syria's senior leadership through a series of terrorist attacks in and around Damascus, [according to CBS News](#).

During the [interview](#), Morell would state:

I'd give them the things that they need to both go after the Assad government but also to have the Iranians and the Russians pay a little price. When we were in Iraq, the Iranians were giving weapons to the Shia's militia who were killing American soldiers. The Iranians were making us pay a price. We need to make the Iranians pay a price in Syria. We need to make the Russians pay a price.

Charlie Rose would then interrupt Morell to clarify by stating:

You make them pay the price by killing Russians? And killing Iranians?

To which Morell replied emphatically:

Yes. Yes. Covertly. You don't tell the world about it, right? You don't stand up at the Pentagon and say we did this. Right? But you make sure they know it in Moscow and Tehran.

Morell's plans echo those laid out by other US policymakers, including [those at the Brookings Institution](#).

And indeed, this appears to be precisely what the US has already been doing. At least two Russian helicopters have been shot down over Syria. The first near the Syrian city of Palmyra by terrorists from the self-proclaimed Islamic State using [what Russian sources claimed](#) was a US-made TOW anti-tank missile system, which is also capable of shooting down slow, low-flying aircraft.



The [second more recently](#) was over territory in Syria's northwestern Idlib province controlled by [US State Department-designated foreign terrorist organisation](#), Jabhat Al Nusra. The helicopter was engaged in humanitarian operations relieving a town besieged by Western-backed militant groups.

Nusra forces [are now leading](#) a US-backed offensive on the Syrian city of Aleppo.

Both incidents appear to be the precise manifestation of Morell's admitted conspiracy to *kill Russians covertly*, with Moscow apparently having gotten the message, and subsequently relaying it to the rest of the world by linking the incidents to US-armed terrorist organisations.

"Morell's Plan" Could Never Work

Morell's plan *to kill Russians and Iranians*, has not deterred Moscow or Tehran. Unlike the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, predicated on a premeditated lie as clearly exposed by the recent UK government-published [Iraq Inquiry](#), Russia and Iran are engaged in Syria at the behest of the Syrian government.

Furthermore, their objective is not simply to project Russian and Iranian power beyond their borders, but to prevent the collapse of Syria into a NATO-induced Libya-style failed state that will serve as a staging ground for the spread of war back over their own borders. In other words, unlike the US' intervention in Iraq seeking extraterritorial geopolitical gain, Russia and Iran's intervention is based on very real and immediate existential concerns.



Thus, Morell's plan *to kill Russians and Iranians* was an ill-conceived attempt to convince both nations to capitulate to US designs in Syria today, so that an even greater loss of Russian and Iranian lives could be embarked upon by wider proxy war in the near future.

In the process of organising this ill-conceived plan, the US has now further implicated itself as a state-sponsor of terrorism, further undermining its own pretext for intervention in Syria to allegedly "fight terrorism."

With US-made TOW missiles conveniently, or very likely, covertly falling into the hands of designated terrorist organisations and being turned against Russian and Iranian forces, the US has also further undermined its own narrative revolving around its primacy as a stabilising force both within the region and globally.

TRANSCRIPT: SELECTED EXCERPTS ON TRUMP, PUTIN AND WAR ON SYRIA

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HEADLINE: Conversation with Mike Morell

BYLINE: CHARLIE ROSE

August 8, 2016

Selected Excerpt (emphasis added)

The Republican presidential nominee delivered a major policy address today in Detroit, Michigan. He stressed his ability to create new jobs and bring prosperity to those who have the very least. Mike Morell is a former acting and deputy director of the CIA who is also a

contributor to CBS News but recently resigned in order to publicly endorse Hillary Clinton. On Friday, he wrote a scathing op-ed said in "The New York Times" where he called Trump a poor and dangerous commander-in-chief. Donald Trump, Morell writes, is not only unqualified for the job but he may well pose a threat to our national security

CHARLIE ROSE: Mike Morell is here. He's a former acting and deputy director of the CIA who is also a contributor to CBS News but recently resigned in order to publicly endorse Hillary Clinton. On Friday, he wrote a scathing op-ed said in "The New York Times" where he called Trump a poor and dangerous commander-in-chief. Donald Trump, Morell writes, is not only unqualified for the job but he may well pose a threat to our national security. I am pleased to welcome Mike Morell back to this table. Welcome.

....

MIKE MORELL: No. In fact, they say, they say that two of their biggest concerns, right, is his narcissism and the constant need to feed it, and two, that he doesn't listen. He doesn't listen to anybody. And when that, don't listen to anybody scares the heck out of me. You are who you are, you're not going to change when you become the president of the United States. I didn't see the entire speech today.

What I did see were references to isolation, right, references to we got to take care of ourselves rather than the rest of our world. You know, references to trade, you know bad trade deals, that all concerns me. You know, here's what I would like to see him do. I would like to see him stand up tomorrow and denounce Putin's military incursion into Ukraine. I would like to see him denounce Putin's annexation of Crimea.

I'd like to see him denounce Putin's assistance to the rebels in eastern Ukraine that resulted in the shoot down of the Malaysian airliner. I'd like to see him renounce what Putin is doing in Syria supporting a butcher and a dictator, right. I'd like to see him just stand up and denounce Putin and I'll tell you that at the end of the day Putin would have more respect for him than he does now.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why do you think he doesn't do that? I mean, some of those things had come at different ways, for example why he doesn't denounce Putin in Ukraine. Do you think it's because he believed Putin did the right thing or he believes it's okay?

MIKE MORELL: No.

ROE: Or he believes that it's okay for them to take over Crimea?

MIKE MORELL: No, I think...

CHARLIE ROSE: Or because he just doesn't understand the consequences of providing leadership of a country that is, you know, the world's greatest power.

MIKE MORELL: You know, the single thing in my op-ed that got most attention was I said this guy has been recruited.

CHARLIE ROSE: So said he's an agent of the Russian Federation.

MIKE MORELL: Unwitting.

CHARLIE ROSE: Unwitting agent of the Russian Federation.

MIKE MORELL: Unwitting agent of federation. He`s been recruited by Putin. That`s why he`s taking the positions he`s taken.

CHARLIE ROSE: And you suggest he`s recruited by the way that Putin played to his ego.

MIKE MORELL: Putin is a trained intelligence officer. He was a very talented KGB officer, right. He`s trained to look at an individual and play to them and to get them to do what he wants them to do, right. And that`s what an agent is.

CHARLIE ROSE: So, you really think that Vladimir Putin sat there, watched American politics and said, I`ll be better off from my objectives for Russia if in fact Donald Trump is elected, and therefore what I will do is do everything I can to make him an agent at my wishes. If I support him he`d become an agent of my wishes.

MIKE MORELL: So, I think there`s two things going on, right. One I wrote about and one I didn`t.

CHARLIE ROSE: And you got to say, OK, go ahead, because when you — you never talk about speculations you do not know.

MIKE MORELL: I do not know this.

CHARLIE ROSE: What Putin thinks and what he`s trying to do with respect to Trump.

MIKE MORELL: Look. I happen to know something about how you recruit people, OK. So, I`ve got a lot of experience with that. So, it`s kind of like my — it is my professional assessment, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right.

MIKE MORELL: That this is what Putin has done.

CHARLIE ROSE: You`re riding on skills you learned at the CIA.

MIKE MORELL: Yes. But I think — I think — I think Putin was thinking two things. One, Putin does not like Secretary Clinton.

CHARLIE ROSE: People that I talked who know Putin say that it is more that than it is Donald Trump as an agent.

MIKE MORELL: I think it`s both, right. I think it`s both. You and I have had a conversations, have that many conversations around this table about Russia and Putin, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right.

MIKE MORELL: And we sat around this table that there`s one thing above all else that Vladimir Putin fears, and that is a Arab spring green revolution- style uprising in the streets of Moscow, all right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Exactly.

MIKE MORELL: And that's what happened after the parliamentary elections during Barack Obama's first term, right. People — the Russian middle class was in the streets. He blamed that on Secretary Clinton. He believes that Secretary Clinton was behind that. She wasn't.

CHARLIE ROSE: It is part of an overall view he has about of chaos and the strong state and it's necessary to have a strong state and you cannot allow people on the streets.

MIKE MORELL: Right. So, part of it he's afraid of her, right. The other part of it is he wants...

CHARLIE ROSE: That is so much more than Secretary Clinton. I mean that doesn't seem like a smart, wise intelligence agent to say that was all about Hillary Clinton.

MIKE MORELL: Look, there are a lot of things that he believes that aren't true. A lot.

CHARLIE ROSE: But foreign policy comes from the White House more than it does from the state department. And she was the agent of — she was a representative and implementer of foreign policy of Barack Obama.

MIKE MORELL: There are a lot of things that he believes that simply aren't true, right. He believes, he really believes, right, that the United States was behind the Democratic movement in Ukraine.

CHARLIE ROSE: He does. But he said it to me. (Inaudible) when I was there.

MIKE MORELL: He believes that. Deep in his heart. He's not making it up, right. He believes this.

CHARLIE ROSE: I believe the CIA (inaudible).

MIKE MORELL: Where (ph) is the CIA, right. So that's one thing. The other thing is I do believe absolutely that he looked at Trump and said this is the guy who I can play, right. All I have to do is compliment him, tell him how great it is and he's going to come to my side of the fence.

CHARLIE ROSE: For me to — go ahead — but you got to prove, what's your best exhibit of where he has done that and he's once again doing it again?

MIKE MORELL: Here's my best exhibit, OK. My best exhibit is, give me another reason why Donald Trump would have said all of the incredibly positive things he has said about Putin as a person and about Russian policy. That is at odds with the United States of America in a campaign where nobody's really focused on Russia. Why would he have done that?

CHARLIE ROSE: Well, one example that's Donald Trump being Donald Trump. In other words, Donald Trump, this guy sort of says certain things and so he responded to it by intuition, by instinct, all that kind of stuff without putting it in an international conflict context. You see what I mean.

MIKE MORELL: Which is — yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: I mean that's who he is.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, but you're making my point.

CHARLIE ROSE: He spends his time on tweets, he spends his time watching television as all — people oppose him a lot of time. It doesn't mean he doesn't get the job done on the campaign trail. He obviously won the Republican nomination.

MIKE MORELL: But you're making my point, right. You're absolutely making my point that his personality, right, gets him to react in these ways that are inconsistent with American interests.

CHARLIE ROSE: And because he — but to react is — I would argue, I'm now arguing the other side. I don't want to use the term devil's advocate but to react that way, does not make him — it makes him — it doesn't make him a tool of the Russian Federation. It doesn't make him an unwitting agent because he hasn't done anything than offer some words up, responded to a guy who says some nice things about him, OK, but stay with me.

MIKE MORELL: Yeah, I disagree, but go ahead.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, you disagree, in what way?

MIKE MORELL: I disagree because...

ROSE What has he done other than said some things.

MIKE MORELL: He has undermined U.S. policy, western policy, with regard to Russia, right. He has told all of those people who follow him, right, the low 40 percent of the people who follow him and believe his every word that Putin is a good guy and Putin is a good leader, right. That undermines what the United States is trying to do.

Putin, you know, has his intelligence agencies, right, try to get that kind of propaganda. This has been free propaganda for Vladimir Putin in the United States of America. No doubt. And Charlie, Putin would never ever say this, of course, but I believe Putin sees Trump as a tool of his now and that's why I said what I said.

CHARLIE ROSE: He thinks he can elect Trump.

MIKE MORELL: He wants Trump to be elected. And there is, you know, there is some evidence that he's trying to help that along.

CHARLIE ROSE: But president Obama says I don't trust Vladimir Putin. That's an opinion about Vladimir Putin.

MIKE MORELL: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Donald Trump says whatever he says, he likes him or he said.

MIKE MORELL: He just saying he's a great leader.

CHARLIE ROSE: He's a great leader.

MIKE MORELL: He's a great leader he's a guy I can work with.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, but hold on a second of great leader. I mean, is he — is he — take a look at what he has done with respect to Russia as president. Has he been a terrible leader? Has

he been a good leader?

MIKE MORELL: Yes, terrible.

CHARLIE ROSE: Has he made Russia more of a player in the world than it was earlier.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, so this is a conversation you had with the vice president, right. So yes, he's made Russia more of a player, but I will tell you that I believe at significant cost to Russia. Think about it this way — think about it this way, Charlie. Who is — just think about Ukraine for a second and we'll come back to Syria.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK.

MIKE MORELL: OK. If you look at Syria — if you look at Ukraine and you ask who is the big loser, with Ukraine, right? Well, first of all, Ukrainian people, who had their aspirations crushed. Second, the United States and the west, which were shown to be unable to stop Putin, right. So we lost something. But the biggest loser in my view, the absolute biggest loser in my view was the Russian economy, the Russian middle class...

CHARLIE ROSE: What sanctions did...

MIKE MORELL: ...and the future — not only sanctions, not only sanctions, right, which have crippled the economy. But Russia's only future is to be integrated with the west. And because of what Putin did in Ukraine, he made sure that that's not going to happen for at least a decade. So Russia's the big loser. This guy is not a great leader, he's a horrible leader. He's undermining the future of his own country by trying to be seen as a greater power. He's not benefiting — Russia's not benefiting from being seen as a great power it's actually being undermined.

CHARLIE ROSE: "The New York Times" today, today made the point, because I'm sure you read — I can't see it on the front page but it made the point that what Putin had done in Syria had changed the dynamic.

MIKE MORELL: True.

CHARLIE ROSE: And was a net plus for Vladimir Putin. This is "The New York Times" reporting today.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, for Vladimir Putin.

CHARLIE ROSE: Yes, for Russia. You think it just Putin as a leader and is not for Russia.

MIKE MORELL: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: Because he represents Russia.

MIKE MORELL: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: He is the...

MIKE MORELL: So I agree, the vice president told you, right, that Putin, you know, Putin would like to get the hell out of there.

CHARLIE ROSE: And the president told me that too, both in interviews.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, right. And I think that's right because he understands he's paying a price. This is very expensive. This is extremely expensive for an economy that can't pay for it. There are Russian soldiers, right, just like in Ukraine — there are Russians soldiers who are coming home dead. It's a political cost to him as well. So, this is not as brilliant strategic stroke on Vladimir Putin's part.

CHARLIE ROSE: When you look at Secretary Clinton, tell me how you think she is different in looking at the world from Barack Obama.

MIKE MORELL: Look, here's the way — here's the way that I think about her. And then maybe we can get to the differences, which is hard. You know —

CHARLIE ROSE: That it seems to be important if you want to know where he wants to take the country and it's simply a third term for the Obama administration.

MIKE MORELL: A lot of time with her in the situation room, a lot of time with her.

CHARLIE ROSE: Oh, this is right where I want to go. So, you what?

MIKE MORELL: OK, a lot of time in the situation room, time with her at the State Department, time with her with foreign visitors visiting Washington, foreign leaders visiting Washington, time with her overseas meeting with foreign leaders — a lot of time with her. I'll tell you the first thing that always struck me in the situation room, and this is going to sound small but it's not.

It's not small at all and we'll compare it to Trump. She was always prepared, you know. There are big thick books, right, that people have to go through, you know. And I would spend hours going through these books for these meetings. It was absolutely clear to me that she had read through these books, she was prepared, she knew what she was talking about, right. That's unusual for principles. I simply don't see Donald Trump doing that. She asked really good questions.

She was not locked into her view. She would change her view if somebody made a compelling argument. She was — she was one of the few cabinet members who came into the situation room and didn't automatically take the bureaucratic view of her department. I mean she was — Leon Panetta was this way, Bob Gates was this way, right. They went...

CHARLIE ROSE: They were different than the bureaucratic view of the institution they serve whether the state or defense or CIA.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, yes, yes, and incredibly impressed me, right, that they would go to what they thought was the best thing for their country even if it was at odds with the bureaucratic view of their own, you know, their own department. The other thing...

CHARLIE ROSE: Bob Gates said the other day that one of the central qualities of a president he respected was a, temperament and b, they listened. He said every good president he knew was a good listener.

MIKE MORELL: And I saw that over and over again, right, and I saw it in just the questions that she asked and how carefully she answered them and then how those answers were

reflected in her views as the conversation moved forward, right. And she was calm and she was collected. And she was tough. I thought she was the toughest person in the room. In terms of...

CHARLIE ROSE: In terms of what she advocated?

MIKE MORELL: Yes, yes. Toughest in terms of — toughest in terms of —

CHARLIE ROSE: Her analysis of the...

MIKE MORELL: Toughest. No, no. Toughest in terms of understanding that — and I put this in the op-ed — toughest in terms of understanding that for diplomacy to be effective, that there had to be a belief on the part of the adversary that you were willing and able to use force if necessary, right? She understands that. She understands that diplomacy without that cannot be effective.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, let me just stop you there. Because I`m — we now talk about what it is to be president day to day and to be, you know, head of the CIA and recommend things to the president. It is the idea of when you use force. It is argued that that — that the president who will probably claim rightly so, that he uses force.

He used his force with drones. He used his force against Osama Bin Laden. He`s used force on a number of times. But often people make a sharp distinction between when she`s prepared to use force whether it`s Syria or whether it`s Libya or whether it`s somewhere else than the president is.

MIKE MORELL: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: So, that`s one way you try to understand where she stands and how she`s different from Barack Obama and you`ve been in the room with both of them. And you know how they talk, how they argue. And not — well to make the point, that what you argue is not necessarily what you believe. You can make an argument to try to understand the problem.

MIKE MORELL: So, you know, she was pushing aggressively, quite frankly along with Leon Panetta and Dave Petraeus for us to be more supportive of the moderate opposition in Syria, in late 2012, early 2013 when Assad was...

CHARLIE ROSE: On his heels.

MIKE MORELL: Was on heels, right. And there were many people who thought he was about ready to go. And not only to push him, right, but also to give diplomacy some leverage.

CHARLIE ROSE: True.

MIKE MORELL: Right. You can`t — you can`t...

CHARLIE ROSE: That`s what the 51 diplomats who made the letter argued. You need to have — diplomats need leverage from the military on the ground to be able to negotiate what is in the best interest the country they represent.

MIKE MORELL: Right. And I think based on the conversation in the sit room, that she thought that significant assistance to the moderate opposition, that you could do that without going

down a slippery slope to U.S. military involvement.

CHARLIE ROSE: Which is what the president thought?

MIKE MORELL: Which is what the president feared, I think.

CHARLIE ROSE: Yeah.

MIKE MORELL: And I think that was the difference between the two at the end of the day, right. So, I believe that she — I believe she understands that you can — that you can go a certain distance, right, without having to go the rest of the way, that each step in the process can be a specific decision and just because you take one step doesn't mean that you have to take all of them.

CHARLIE ROSE: This conversation is about why you wouldn't trust Donald Trump but admired Hillary Clinton and believed she would be an effective force. Let's go down the lines in terms of important points. How would she be different? What is her position on ISI and what is about it that recommends itself to you that has not been done?

MIKE MORELL: Yes. So, she's very supportive of what the president's done. She would go a little bit further is what she said, right. So she would, you know, show would — more Special Forces, consider no-fly zone.

CHARLIE ROSE: The president has been doing that gradually.

MIKE MORELL: Gradually, right. And so he's been getting — moving down the line, right, and she would just do more of that. You said something really important earlier, Charlie, which was for this to end, right, there's got to be — Russia and the United States and quite frankly the Iranians have seen a table for two.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right, absolutely.

MIKE MORELL: That there's got to be an agreement on a transition to a new government, right. I think she understands that for us to have leverage in that conversation, that we got to have more skin in the game from a military perspective. Not U.S. troops — not U.S. boots on the ground but more skin on the game, right.

That's why she's talking about a no-fly zone, right. That's why she's talking about more Special Forces. She understands that that is necessary for the leverage you need in those political discussions.

CHARLIE ROSE: Is that possible because it looks like Russia's moving away from that kind of agreement?

MIKE MORELL: I don't know if it's possible, right. I don't know if it's possible.

CHARLIE ROSE: Then maybe they're waiting for the next president?

MIKE MORELL: Now we switch to Michael Morell's view, and you said you wanted to touch on all these, right. I'd switch to Michael Morell's view for a second. So, I think that given where we are — because I don't think — I think it's possible to squeeze ISI down to almost nothing in Iraq and Syria.

But I fear without a resolution to the Syrian civil war, that other jihadist groups are just going to pop up in its place. Al-Nusra, right, which is the Al-Qaeda group in Syria is already growing in strength, right, as a result of — for lack of resolution of the Syrian civil war.

CHARLIE ROSE: And is redefining itself.

MIKE MORELL: So that's got to be resolved, right. That Syrian civil war has to be resolved and you have to be able to convince the Russians and the Iranians that it's in their interest. Here's quite frankly what I would recommend. I would recommend that we, that — let me back up a second.

So, the outcome we want is a transition from Assad to a government that can represent all the Syrian people, but we want to do it without destroying the institutions of the Syrian government.

CHARLIE ROSE: Which is what we did in Iraq?

MIKE MORELL: Which is what we did in Iraq and which is what happened on its own in Libya.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right.

MIKE MORELL: So we want to make our transition keeping the Syrian military, the Syrian Security Services, keeping them as intact as possible, right, as we want to do.

CHARLIE ROSE: Exactly what Putin says he wants to do.

MIKE MORELL: So you don't want to destroy those things, right. You don't want to destroy those things. So here's what I think you want to do. I think you want to covertly, not openly but covertly, but you certainly want them to know, you want to covertly tell the moderate opposition that you're supporting to go after — this is a big deal — to go after the Russians and the Iranians who are on the ground.

They got to pay a price for what they're doing. Just like we made the Russians pay a price in Afghanistan for what they're doing. We have to make them pay a price. We have to make them...

CHARLIE ROSE: By supporting the Mujahedin.

MIKE MORELL: Yes. We have to make them to want to go home. We have to make them want to have a deal, right, so that's number one.

CHARLIE ROSE: Now, how do we do that?

MIKE MORELL: We ask the moderate opposition — we give the moderate opposition weapons.

CHARLIE ROSE: What is it they want that they don't have?

MIKE MORELL: You know, Dave Petraeus could tell you exactly what they want. You know, I'm not a military guy.

CHARLIE ROSE: In Afghanistan we (inaudible).

MIKE MORELL: Right. But I'd give them the things that they need to both go after the Assad government, but also to have the Iranians and the Russians pay a little price. When we were in Iraq, the Iranians were giving weapons to the Shi'a militia who were killing American soldiers, right. The Iranians were making us pay a price. We need to make the Iranians pay a price in Syria. We need to make the Russians pay a price. The other thing we need to do...

CHARLIE ROSE: We make them pay the price by killing Russians?

MIKE MORELL: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: And killing Iranians?

MIKE MORELL: Yes. Covertly. You don't tell the world about it, right. You don't stand up at the Pentagon and say we did this. Here's the other thing I want to do, I want to go after — I want to go after those things that Assad sees as his personal power base, right. I want to scare Assad. So, I want to — I want to go after his presidential guard. I want to bomb his offices in the middle of the night.

CHARLIE ROSE: Well, that happened about two years ago as you remember when his brother in law was...

MIKE MORELL: I want to destroy his presidential aircraft on the ground. I want to destroy his presidential helicopters. I want to make him think we're coming after him, right. I'm not advocating assassinating him, I'm not advocating that. I'm advocating going after that what he thinks is his power base, right, and what he needs to survive.

I want him to think about this is not going to end well for me, right. I want to put pressure on him, I want to put pressure on the Iranians, I want to put pressure on the Russians to come to that diplomatic settlement.

CHARLIE ROSE: Because that's the only thing that will achieve it if they feel like they're hurting.

MIKE MORELL: Yes. This is me talking here.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK, well do you think Hillary Clinton believes as you do —

MIKE MORELL: I don't know, I have not talked to her about this.

CHARLIE ROSE: OK.

MIKE MORELL: I do believe she believes that we need more diplomatic leverage.

CHARLIE ROSE: Why did you come to this conclusion? Because there was a failure of everything else and it wasn't happening? It was moving not towards that kind of agreement...

MIKE MORELL: We're moving away from it.

CHARLIE ROSE: Away from it.

MIKE MORELL: We're moving away from it. That's what "The New York Times" article said. That's what I believe.

CHARLIE ROSE: "The New York Times" article also said that we — that the Saudis had stopped supplying weapons to the opposition forces too.

MIKE MORELL: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: The Saudis.

MIKE MORELL: Right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Let me talk about people in the region.

MIKE MORELL: Yeah, this is a good one.

CHARLIE ROSE: What do we need to do?

MIKE MORELL: Our allies in the region — I'll leave (ph) a couple things. They believe that the United States of America — they believe that the Obama administration is not listening to them, right. That they've got points of view they feel strongly about — another thing they believe is that the United States does not have their back, particularly with regard to Iran.

They believe that we don't understand that they see Iran as their Soviet Union, right. So there are two things I'd say about Secretary Clinton here. One is, they do believe that Secretary Clinton listens and I think where Secretary Clinton is on Iran, based on what I've heard her say and based on what I've read is look, the nuclear deal, a really good thing, I think.

She thinks that — I think that too, but at the same time I think she believes that I know, based on what she said that she believes that we need to push back harder against Iranian malign behavior in the region, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: A support should we be doing.

MIKE MORELL: Let me give you an example and I think we've talked about this around the table. They provide money and assistance to terrorist groups, Hamas, Hezbollah, right. Hezbollah could not exist without the support it gets from Iran.

They supply money and weapons to Shi'a groups in the region who are trying to overthrow governments. Best example is Yemen, right, where they provided weapons and money to the Houthis who actually overthrew the government there.

CHARLIE ROSE: Where they're competing with the Saudis.

MIKE MORELL: Where they're competing with the Saudis, right. So, a very simple example, right, ships leave Iran filled with weapons for the Houthis, right. I believe the U.S. Navy should board those ships and if there are weapons on them, they should turn them around and send them back. That's pushing back against Iranian bad behavior.

CHARLIE ROSE: Is that what Secretary Clinton believes needs to do? Be more aggressive in terms of the Iranian behavior.

MIKE MORELL: Yes. So, use the nuclear...

CHARLIE ROSE: Which is not part of the deal?

MIKE MORELL: So, use the nuclear agreement — use the nuclear agreement to try to forge a more positive relationship at the same time while you push back, right, against their bad behavior.

CHARLIE ROSE: North Korea, Secretary Clinton said it's a real risk, North Korea. What should we do? What would Secretary Clinton do? We don't what Donald Trump would do. I don't.

MIKE MORELL: Donald Trump has said what he would do. He had said he'd sit down and talk to Kim Jong-un. He said he would invite Kim Jong-un to come to the United States of America for a conversation.

CHARLIE ROSE: Let me stop you there. Forget that it came from Donald Trump. Is it a mistake to talk to Kim Jong-un?

MIKE MORELL: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: To talk to him?

MIKE MORELL: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: Because you give him credibility?

MIKE MORELL: Because what he wants more than anything else is for the United States of America to acknowledge that he is a nuclear power and that he will remain a nuclear power. And it is the policy of the United States of America and I don't think Mr. Trump gets any of this — understands any of this, right. It is the policy of the United States of America for North Korea to get rid of its nuclear weapons. That is our policy.

CHARLIE ROSE: So, as a condition to talking, get rid of your weapons?

MIKE MORELL: As a condition, yes, yes. You have to — you have to get rid — we're not going to recognize you. We're not going to normalize relations with you until you agree to get rid of your weapons, right. And what Donald Trump said is come talk to me, right. And so he would give him incredible credibility.

CHARLIE ROSE: China and the South China Sea. What should we be doing with respect to Chinese aggression in the South China Sea potentially building bases there?

MIKE MORELL: Yeah, so, can I just back up a second and then take the 25,000 foot view and then come back to the South China Sea. And here I think — I think president Obama and Secretary Clinton understand this perfectly. The most important bilateral relationship for the future of East Asia, for the future of the world I think is the relationship between Washington and Beijing, and there are two things, as a strong statement but I believe it to be true.

There are two things that are pulling us together in a good way and two things that are pulling us apart. The two things pulling us together, Charlie, are one, we both have an interest, we both have an interest in the success of the Chinese economy particularly a reforming Chinese economy, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Because of its impact on the global economy.

MIKE MORELL: Because of its impact on the global economy.

CHARLIE ROSE: And the confidence it gives them as a state.

MIKE MORELL: Absolutely, absolutely. And the disincentive it gives them for messing around, right. Two is, and I base this, you know, on my own conversations with Chinese officials, you know, my counterparts, base this on conversation with my counterparts in China. I believe there are growing numbers of places in the world where our national security interests overlap than actually where they are in conflict. And I believe there's potential for us to cooperate together.

CHARLIE ROSE: Do the Chinese believe that?

MIKE MORELL: Yes.

CHARLIE ROSE: Do they want to do that?

MIKE MORELL: Yes. I think they believe it and I think increasingly they're coming to understand would be in their interest. So that is potentially pulling us together, right — two positive things. What are the two negative things? The two negative things are we both have large militaries on the same place on the planet, right. That means you have...

CHARLIE ROSE: The Pacific.

MIKE MORELL: The Pacific. So, that means you have — what does that mean? It means you have to plan for war against each other, and we both do. It means you have to equip yourself in terms of weapons systems for war against each other, and both of us do. And it means you have to exercise those forces for war against each other and both of us do. Both sides see all three of those things. That leads to a national tension in the relationship that pulls you apart. And then you got...

CHARLIE ROSE: But they also — they are very upset about the fact, you know, that we seem to be increasing our relationship with India and Vietnam and Philippines and drawing a circle around them.

MIKE MORELL: Yes, and that comes to the final point that's pulling us apart, and you're absolutely right. So the final thing that's pulling us apart is, you know, we are the power in East Asia and we're established co-power. They are a rising power. They don't have a lot of say. They want more say in the world around them as they gain strength, right. They want more say, we have it. How does that get resolved, right?

I think there's an answer to that that president Obama understands and that Secretary Clinton understands, and that is that we will give China more room to exercise influence if they play by the rules of the international order. So, what does that mean, right? What does that mean? It means for example that I think it was a mistake for the United States of America to push back when China want to create a regional development bank.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right. Clearly, that looks like — because Europe broke ranks right away.

MIKE MORELL: The Brits broke rank immediately, right. So, you don't push back on stuff like that where they're actually trying to play by the rules, right. You push back on the South China Sea stuff where they are breaking the rules, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Mr. Xi, tear down those islands.

MIKE MORELL: And I think that's the right approach. I think president Obama understands that. I think that he's taken us down the road towards a better solution to this relationship long term and I think she will continue in that direction.

CHARLIE ROSE: Is it fair to say — I've got to close this — Is it fair to say the two, since you were there although they were there at the time, Osama Bin Laden and all that, but the two changes that are so apparent to decision makers today, one is cyber and the other is in a sense the rise of non-state actors.

MIKE MORELL: I agree a hundred percent, agree a hundred percent. I'd still list, well, put it this way. I'd list terrorist attacks against the United States of America including the homeland as the number one threat, the non- state actor, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: And with that, the potential that they somehow might acquire or buy some weapon of mass destruction whatever it might be?

MIKE MORELL: Yes. That's a serious issue, right. And then I think the second, the fastest growing threat, and number two on the list is cyber in all of its dimensions, from what nation states do, to criminal groups, to hacktivists, to all of this different people doing all these different things on cyber.

CHARLIE ROSE: And the political development that you've written about in which is apparent in much of this is not of that magnitude, is the rise of populism.

MIKE MORELL: And in the United States.

CHARLIE ROSE: In the United States.

MIKE MORELL: You know, I was asked — Charlie, I was asked by an Australian think tank — an Australian think tank came to me and they said, they said, you know you've analyzed the politics of other countries for 30 years. Would you analyze your own and write something for us. So I did, and in this piece I wrote, which was published a couple weeks ago, I said there are three big dynamics here in the United States. One is what I call income insecurity, right.

CHARLIE ROSE: Right.

MIKE MORELL: There's been a whole bunch of people that have been left behind by globalization and technology.

CHARLIE ROSE: Conventional wisdom is that they are attracted to the candidacy of Donald Trump.

MIKE MORELL: They were attracted to the candidacy of Bernie Sanders who said I will fix this with income redistribution and they are attracted to the candidacy of Donald Trump who simply says I'll fix it.

CHARLIE ROSE: All about trade.

MIKE MORELL: I'll fix it by tearing up trade deals and making better deals. I'll fix it by telling Ford Motor Company you cannot move to Mexico, right. How do you do that? So that's one, right. Second, right, is the belief — that first one is not a small percentage of the population

because real incomes for American households, for the majority of American households that have been going down for the last generation, right. So this is real.

I think it's a failure of our education system not to keep up with changes in globalization and technology but that's a whole different issue. The second is the belief among a lot of people, right, that establishment candidates, establishment politicians can't get anything done. A lot of people believe that.

CHARLIE ROSE: Because of gridlock in Washington.

MIKE MORELL: Yeah, and so those people who believe that went to — went to non-establishment candidates on both sides, right. Sixty-five percent of the vote cast during the primaries was from non-establishment candidates. And then the third is, and this is sad for me as an American to say, as I believe that there is some number of uneducated white Americans who fear the browning of America, who fear the growth and the number...

CHARLIE ROSE: Change in the demographics.

MIKE MORELL: And the influence of minorities in America manifested by the election of Barack Obama to the presidency. And they are attracted to Donald Trump's xenophobia. And I think those are the three dynamics that launched him, right. And you know, the first one — all three of them need to be addressed, right. All three of those things need to be addressed. I happen to believe that she will do a much better job addressing those issues than he will and that's why I did what I did.

CHARLIE ROSE: Thank you for coming.

MIKE MORELL: Always great to be with you, Charlie.

CHARLIE ROSE: Thank you for joining us. See you next time.

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