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Meet the Newest Apologist for Israel: Rear Admiral John Kirby



White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby.

Rear Admiral John Kirby is the spokesman for the National Security Council and has become the presidential spokesman on sensitive foreign policy and national security issues for President Joe Biden. Kirby took on the latter role because the current White House spokesperson, Karine Jean-Pierre, is too inexperienced to handle the sensitive questions that deal with Ukraine and Gaza. Kirby has become the administration's strong public apologist for Israeli actions in Gaza, including Monday's deadly drone attack that killed seven aid workers from the World Central Kitchen.

Since Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen will be needed to distribute the food and medical supplies that the United States is supposed to deliver to a military-built pier, Israel's horrific attack will certainly complicate the distribution of food needed to address the famine conditions in Gaza. WCK has suspended its operations in Gaza in the wake of the attack.

Israeli Defense Forces have been vigorous in blocking aid shipments into Gaza, which the United States should find intolerable.

Tuesday's press conference highlighted the worst of the administration's predictable defenses and apologies for Israel's illegal and immoral military campaign against Palestinian civilians. Once again, the worst of Kirby's remarks were not referenced in the *Washington Post* and received an anodyne one-sentence summary in the *New York Times*. I believe it is important to understand the meaning and implications of Kirby's callous and callow remarks. On the same day that Kirby was defending Israel's attack, moreover, Secretary of State Antony Blinken was holding a news conference in Paris, France and made no attempt to condemn the Israeli attack.

One of Kirby's most offensive responses concerned a legitimate question regarding the possibility of the United States organizing a "protective force" for aid workers. Kirby did not believe the United States had a role to play in protecting aid workers because the "Israeli Defense Forces were providing that protection." In other words, the day after the IDF demonstrated an appalling lack of responsibility in destroying three vehicles that were properly identified for a mission that had been coordinated with Israeli officials, Kirby blithely cited the IDF, already responsible for the deaths of hundreds of UN officials and aid workers, as a legitimate "protective force."

When Kirby was asked about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's unconscionably dismissive remark that such incidents "happen in war," Kirby said that he didn't want to get into a "tit-for-tat" exchange with the Israeli leader. And when Kirby was asked about the need for a deconfliction process to prevent the killing of civilians, he said that the United States was working on that with the Israelis. Unlike Israeli bombing campaigns in Lebanon and Syria in the past, when there were deconfliction campaigns to prevent unnecessary losses, the Israelis have demonstrated no interest in deconfliction in Gaza. The IDF is comfortable killing anything that moves, even three Israeli hostages who were seeking safety.

Kirby's apologies for Israel included a denial that Israel had broken any humanitarian laws in its bombing campaign. Furthermore, Kirby said that the Department of State had examined the various incidents involving civilian deaths, and had found "no incidents violating humanitarian law." In other words, we are to believe that in less than six months of fighting, Israel has killed twice as many women and children in Gaza than Russia has killed in Ukraine, but that no humanitarian laws were broken. Israel's "precise" operation against al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City left the medical compound in ruins. President Biden often

discusses Russia's terror campaign in Ukraine, but ignores Israel's terror campaign in Gaza that is more deadly.

It is unlikely that the World Central Kitchen tragedy will be the tipping point for Biden. The day after the Israeli attack, the Biden administration was pressing Congress to approve an \$18 billion sale of F-15s to Israel. The F-15 fighter jet is widely used in Gaza. Meanwhile, the Israelis are preparing a request for an additional F-35 jets outside the annual \$3.8 billion in military aid that Israel receives. Blinken in Paris and Kirby in Washington defended the transfer of these lethal weapons systems to Israel at this juncture, and emphasized there would be "no conditions" on military aid to Israel. When the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Brown, Jr., said that Israel has "not received everything they've asked for," the Pentagon immediately issued a correction that emphasized continued "security assistance to our ally Israel as they defend themselves from Hamas."

There is no question that Israel's attack on the World Central Kitchen was part of a much larger military campaign that ignores the needs of the civilian population as well as the need for the coordination of humanitarian assistance. Israel is the key roadblock to getting aid into Gaza, and the Biden administration has done nothing to challenge Israel's intransigence. It is noteworthy that government lawyers in Britain have advised their government to stop sending military weaponry to Israel because of Israel's violations of humanitarian law.

Meanwhile, one of the *Washington Post's* leading apologists for Israel, Ruth Marcus, published a long oped on Wednesday that vilified the International Court of Justice for declaring that South Africa had made a "plausible" claim that Israel was engaging in genocidal actions in Gaza. There have been more than 32,000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza, mostly women and children, but Marcus finds the ICJ's "explosive accusation against Israel hard to grasp." Marcus' lawyerly defense of Israel maintains that the ICJ "has jurisdiction to decide only the genocide question" and "doesn't have the authority to determine whether Israel has violated the broader requirements of international humanitarian law." Pathetic.

Melvin A. Goodman is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy and a professor of government at Johns Hopkins University. A former CIA analyst, Goodman is the author of [Failure of Intelligence: The Decline and Fall of the CIA](#) and [National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism](#). and [A Whistleblower at the CIA](#). His most recent books are "American Carnage: The Wars of Donald Trump" (Opus Publishing, 2019) and "Containing the National Security State" (Opus Publishing, 2021). Goodman is the national security columnist for counterpunch.org.

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