



‘Response to military action is military action’: Iranian UN envoy **3**



Soleimani was official guest of Iraq: Judiciary **3**



Iran’s flag hoisted at Youth Olympic Village **15**



Hollywood melts down over Iran airstrike – label Trump a ‘threat’ to America **16**

Iraqis mourn Soleimani



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Tehran hosting intl. expo on airport, related industries

TEHRAN — Iran’s 5th International Exhibition of Airport, Airplane, Flight Industries and Related Equipment kicked off at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds on Saturday, IIRB reported. **→4**

U.S. responsible for consequences of terror act, Zarif tells Qatar FM

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday that the United States is responsible for consequences of its terrorist action in assassinating Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani.

He made the remarks during a meeting with Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani in Tehran.

Noting that “Iran does not seek tension in the region,” Zarif said “presence and interference of foreign and extra-regional forces have caused instability and tension in our sensitive region.” **→2**

U.S. legal experts say Soleimani assassination violates international law

The assassination of Iranian Lieutenant General Qasem Soleimani in Iraq by U.S. forces on the orders of President Donald Trump violated American and international law, according to U.S. legal experts and a senior UN rights investigator.

Some U.S. legal experts argued Trump lacked the legal authority to kill Soleimani on Iraqi soil without the permission of Iraq’s government. **→13**



ARTICLE

Yuram Abdullah Weiler
Analyst and journalist

Red Line Crossed: U.S. assassination of Qasem Soleimani

“Shahid Soleimani is the international face of the resistance and all who have a heart-felt connection to the resistance seek his blood revenge.”

—Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei

Major General Qasem Soleimani, the Commander of the Quds Forces of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), was martyred along with Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Deputy Commander Abu Mahdi Al Muhandis by a missile attack while leaving Baghdad International Airport on Friday morning, January 3, 2020. Helicopters of the United States forces carried out the criminal assassination ordered by the cowardly Donald Trump, who himself avoided military service during America’s war on Vietnam.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei ordered a three-day mourning period be observed for Martyr Soleimani. Tens of Thousands of Iranians took to the streets in an outpouring of grief and outrage over the slaughter of General Soleimani and Al Muhandis by the warmongering Washington regime, whom Ayatollah Khamenei warned that “severe revenge awaits those criminals who have tainted their filthy hands with his blood and the blood of the other martyrs.” A total of seven individuals were martyred in the brazen U.S. assault, including PMF airport protocol officer, Mohammed Reda. It is possible that the terrorist cult Mujahedin-e Khalq (MeK) was involved in the assassination operation by providing intelligence on the whereabouts of General Soleimani to their U.S. backers. Previously, in June of 2019, the MeK announced that it would welcome the killing of General Soleimani.

The U.S. war department issued a statement on the targeted assassination of Martyr Soleimani and the others in language that demonstrates the cognitive disorder about which Iran’s Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, previously had spoken. The pusillanimous U.S. president had ordered the “decisive defensive action to protect U.S. personnel abroad by killing Qasem Soleimani,” according to a statement by the Pentagon. **→7**

Iranians view the killing of Soleimani as an act of war: Paul Pillar

By Javad Heirannia

TEHRAN — Professor Paul Pillar, who was CIA intelligence analyst for 28 years, tells that Trump often does not understand the nature and consequences of his own actions.

Pillar says “Iranians view the killing of Soleimani as an act of war. Trump probably views it as an act short of war.”

He also adds that “President Trump’s domestic political standing figures into almost everything he does, including in foreign and security policy. It is quite possible that one of his considerations in ordering the assassination was to provide a

distraction from his domestic political problems, and to exploit the widespread antipathy toward Iran that is frequently voiced in American political debate.”

Following is the text of the interview:

■ The United States assassinated General Qasem Soleimani in an act ordered by President Donald Trump. By doing so, the United States appears to have raised tensions with Iran to avoid impeachment so that it can marginalize U.S. domestic affairs. What is your assessment?

A: President Trump’s domestic political

standing figures into almost everything he does, including in foreign and security policy. It is quite possible that one of his considerations in ordering the assassination was to provide a distraction from his domestic political problems, and to exploit the widespread antipathy toward Iran that is frequently voiced in American political debate. But it also is likely that Trump was responding to hardline pressures within his own administration to strike at Iran in some way, following the assault on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad by Iraqi elements allied with Iran. **→6**

The martyrdom that would lead to a real “Islamic Awakening”

By Ali Rajabi

TEHRAN — Less than a decade ago, people of Arab countries began to protest against their dictators to achieve justice and freedom also named “Arab Spring”. This moral path took a detour and lost its right way. It was the U.S. effort to mislead the people by creating some terrorist groups including ISIS,

Al-NOSRAH and ETC.

Donald Trump, the current president of the U.S., condemned Barack Obama for the creation of ISIS. (Time; August 11, 2016). ISIS and other terrorist groups like Al-Nosrah and Al-Qaeda had committed many violent crimes against people in Iraq, Syria, Lybia, Lebanon and even Iran for five years (Independent 4 December 2019).

pendent 4 December 2019).

On the other hand, the Resistance Front, led by Gen. Soleimani was trying to fight with ISIS. After several years, the Resistance Front in cooperation with the Iraqi troops (Hashd-Al-shaabi), Syrian military, and local people could defeat terrorist groups and bring peace to the region. **→7**

A turning point

By Mahmood Khaghani

In what is widely considered a US act of terrorism, President Trump ordered an assassination team to eliminate Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, leader of the foreign wing of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp and Abu Mahdi al-Mohandes, commander of part of Iraqi’s national defence force on a road leading to Baghdad International Airport on Jan. 2nd 2020.

While the cynical reason given for this esca-

lation is deterrence, the true reason appears to be to divert attention from domestic pressure to impeach President Trump for political corruption None Dare Call It Conspiracy

On Friday Dec. 27th 2019 a US civilian contractor was killed in a rocket attack on the K1 military base in oil province of Kirkuk in northern Baghdad where US service members and civilian contractors were located.

While no one to date has claimed responsibility,

the US in retaliation conducted air strikes in Iraq and Syria against Iraqi militia units affiliated to Iraq national defence force whom US blamed for the attack. Weapon caches and command and control centres at five sites associated with Kataib Hezbollah were hit on Sunday, 29th Dec. 2019. Iraqi officials confirmed 25 were killed and more than 51 injured. Following this, part of the US Embassy Green Zone was occupied in a peaceful protest. **→3**



Senior officials visit Lieutenant General Soleimani’s family

TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a number of other top officials visited the family of Lieutenant General Soleimani who was assassinated in a United States’ airstrike in Baghdad on Friday morning.

In his visit late on Friday, Ayatollah Khamenei said that Lieutenant General Soleimani had no fear on the path of God and jihad.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that Soleimani was martyred by the “most vicious individuals in the world,” a clear reference to the White House officials. **→2**



ARTICLE

Batool Subeiti
Journalist from London

America shoots itself in the foot

By Batool Subeiti

Following the U.S. President’s approval of the assassination of Iran’s top general, head of IRGC Quds Force Qasem Soleimani, the U.S. bombed a car carrying him in early Friday morning, shortly after he arrived at Iraq’s Baghdad airport. The strike also killed Iraqi militia commander, deputy chief of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and at least 6 other people who were with them.

It is important to note that irrespective of America or Iran’s policies, there are some basic rules of engagement based on mutual agreements that are enshrined in international law. The world cannot run on the whims and desires of an establishment that does as it sees fit with no regards for consequences of such actions.

Why should America be allowed to jeopardise the interests of Britain, France or other countries in a conflict they haven’t chosen for themselves, based on the American establishment’s reckless actions? Indeed, such individualism is not only a display of America’s continued aggression in the region but is a direct threat to global peace and stability.

Soleimani was an official figure and representative of the Iranian nation, whereby his death shook the Islamic Republic of Iran that has called for a 3-day commemoration of mourning across the country.

America dropped missiles on the general of another nation’s military, while he was in an international airport of another country. His murder under such circumstances is a clear violation of international laws of engagement and relations between the countries, reflecting America’s reckless abuse of power as it serves to normalise the breaking of international laws, granting excuse to other nations in the pursuit of such chaos.

Should a North Korean diplomat now feel safe on the American soil, in the wake of Soleimani’s attack? Most certainly government officials, generals and representatives across the globe are at risk when such illegal measures are executed and justified by the world’s most powerful country. **→6**

Iranians hold gatherings to commemorate General Soleimani

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** – Masses of people held gatherings at Tehran University and Palestine Square to mourn for Lieutenant General Soleimani, who was assassinated by the United States in Baghdad on Friday morning. The people, chanting “death to America” and “death to Israel”, urged “harsh revenge” for the U.S. terrorist action.

Angry people also gathered at Imam Square in Isfahan to express their disgust of the U.S. behavior.

Lieutenant General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air strike on Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon announced that President Trump had ordered the attack on Soleimani.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a message on Friday saying Iran will take “tough revenge” on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

Also, on Saturday huge numbers of Iraqis gathered for the funeral procession of the legendary Iranian general, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of Iraq’s PMF, in Kadhimiya, a city near Baghdad.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi and some other Iraqi figures joined mourners in in Baghdad.

The body of the martyred general was to be transferred to Iran after the funeral processions in Iraq.

Protests planned across U.S. to condemn assassination of Lieutenant General Soleimani

By staff and agency

More than 70 demonstrations were planned across the U.S. on Saturday to protest the Trump administration’s assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and decision to send about 3,000 more soldiers to the Middle East.

The protests were being spearheaded by Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, a U.S.-based anti-war coalition, in conjunction with more than a dozen organizations. The coalition is demanding that the U.S. withdraw all troops from Iraq and end what it says is a war on Iran, according to spokesperson Walter Smolarek, USA Today reported on Saturday.

“The targeted assassination and murder of a central leader of Iran is designed to initiate a new war. Unless the people of the United States rise up and stop it, this war will engulf the whole region and could quickly turn into a global conflict of unpredictable scope and potentially the gravest consequences,” ANSWER said on its website.

Some demonstrations began Friday night. Dozens of protesters gathered outside Sen. Chuck Schumer’s apartment in Brooklyn, New York.

Kole Oakes, candidate member with the Party for Socialism and Liberation, said, “We’re hoping to convey that the Iraqi people, the Irani people are not our enemies, that they are our brothers and sisters in the struggle and it is the imperialist capitalist system that is our enemy.”

Organizers could not say how many people were expected to attend the protests Saturday, but Facebook events suggest that hundreds of people planned to participate. More than 1,500 people indicated interest in Facebook events for protests in Chicago and San Francisco, along with nearly 700 people for protests in Madison, Wisconsin, and in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

“We’re having the protest to say no to war and to bring the troops home from Iraq,” said Anamaria Meneses, an organizer with the Justice Center en El Barrio, ANSWER’s New York City branch. “Our tax dollars shouldn’t be spent on killing people abroad. We should stand against senseless wars.”

The ANSWER coalition formed in the wake of 9/11, organizing demonstrations against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that drew hundreds of thousands of protesters.

Senior officials visit Lieutenant General Soleimani’s family

1 → On Saturday, Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani and Mohammad Reza Aref, head of the Hope parliamentary faction, also visited the family of the Lieutenant general.

Influential Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr also visited the family of the martyred general.

■ ‘Iran will surely avenge Soleimani’s assassination’
President Hassan Rouhani said Iran will definitely take revenge on the U.S. for assassinating Soleimani.

“Vengeance for martyring General Soleimani is an inalienable right for the Iranian people,” Rouhani said while meeting Soleimani’s family on Saturday morning, Mehr reported.

He offered condolences to Soleimani’s family for their loss, but also congratulated them for the top general’s martyrdom.

Rouhani said not only the Iranian nation, but also all Muslims and free-hearted people of the world are mourning the loss of the honorable martyr.

“People know the dimensions of his jihad and sacrifices but his actions and major measures should be elucidated for the world,” he said.

“This honorable martyr’s services aimed at providing security for the country, the region, especially for the people of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Afghanistan, is unforgettable,” the president added.

Soleimani was martyred in an airstrike at Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU) and some other forces of the PMU along with their guests.

The Pentagon had announced earlier that General Soleimani was killed on Donald Trump’s order.

According to the New York Times, the top Iranian general was killed when an American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy that was leaving the airport.

The strike was a serious escalation of Trump’s growing confrontation with Tehran, which began almost a week ago when U.S. forces conducted drone strikes on locations of the PMU forces in Iraq, killing at least 25 individuals and leaving another 51 injured.

The attacks came in response to alleged attacks targeting American forces.

In his remarks, Rouhani said the crime committed by the U.S. will not be forgiven by Iranians.

“The Americans did not realize what a grave mistake they made,” he said. “They will see the consequences of this heinous act not only today, but also in years to come.”

A glance at Gen. Soleimani’s anti-terrorist record



By Mohammad Jafari

In spite of the hegemonic powers’ widespread propaganda campaign against Iranian Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani to create an illogical pro-violence image of him, a glance at the general’s biography will provide a different story.

General Soleimani’s lifestyle, thoughts, activities, discipline, management capability and his self-sacrifice in countering the real threats against the international peace and security can easily lead the public opinion worldwide towards realizing that who the assassinated commander was and who the assassins are.

The Pentagon said on Friday that U.S. President Donald Trump had ordered the killing of Qassem Soleimani in an air raid on Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning.

The assassination operation was reportedly planned by Michael D’ Andrea, the chairman of the Iran Operation Desk at CIA.

■ Biography

Soleimani was born on 11 March 1957 in the village of Qanat-e Malek, Kerman Province, in southeast Iran. He grew up in a farmer family. In his youth, he moved to the city of Kerman and worked as a construction worker to help his father financially. In 1975, he began working as a contractor for the Kerman Water Organization. When not at work, he spent his time lifting weights in local gyms.

■ Military career

Soleimani joined the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in 1979 following the Islamic Revolution. Reportedly, his training was minimal, but he advanced rapidly.

Soleimani began his serious military career at the beginning of Iraq’s war against Iran in the 1980s, during which he eventually commanded the 41st Division. He was later involved in extraterritorial operations, providing military assistance to the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon.

From 1998 until his martyrdom on January 3, 2020, he was commander of the IRGC Quds Force.

■ Cultural depictions

He was described as having “a calm presence” and as carrying himself “inconspicuously and rarely raising his voice”, exhibiting “humble charisma”.

Unlike other IRGC commanders, he usually did not appear in his official military clothing, even in the battlefield.

■ Soleimani’s role in war on Takfiri terrorists in Syria

In 2012, Soleimani helped bolster the Syrian

government in war against terrorist groups, particularly in its operations against the ISIL (Daesh) terrorist group and its offshoots.

Soleimani found out at the beginning of the Syria crisis that the popular protests in the Arab country are turning into an armed conflict against the Damascus government. The general had found out that certain regional countries with the support of their Western friends are hatching a plot against Syria via arming militants and flocking a large number of al-Qaeda terrorists to the war-hit country to finally bring Damascus to its knees. This strategy was intended to force Syria to abdicate the resistance front against the hegemonic powers and the Zionist regime of Israel.

Soleimani not only played a key role in defeating Al-Qaeda-linked terrorist groups but he was one of the key commanders in damaging Daesh, also called ISIL or ISIS.

Soleimani was reportedly the commander of Syria’s 4th Armored Division in liberating Aleppo, the second largest Syrian city, from militants.

In 2015, he was reportedly the main architect of involving Russia as a new partner with Bashar al-Assad and the Lebanese Hezbollah in war on terrorism.

■ Soleimani was the man who saved Iraq from ISIL

Soleimani also assisted in the command of the combined Iraqi government and popular forces of Hash al-Shaabi that advanced against the ISIL terrorists in 2014–2015.

He was in the Iraqi city of Amerli to work with the Iraqi forces to push back ISIL.

In 2014, the Los Angeles Times reported that Amerli was the first town to successfully withstand an ISIL invasion. It said the city was secured thanks to “an unusual partnership of Iraqi and Kurdish soldiers and Iranian-backed popular forces under the command of General Soleimani.

A senior Iraqi official told the BBC at the time that when the city of Mosul fell into ISIL, the rapid reaction of the Iranian commander, rather than American bombing, was what prevented a more widespread collapse.

Soleimani also seemed to have been instrumental in planning the operation to relieve Amerli in Sallahudin province.

In fact, the Quds Force operatives under Soleimani’s command were deeply involved with the Iraqi army and popular forces as well as the Kurdish fighters in the battle of Amerli. This not only provided liaisons for intelligence-sharing but also the supply of arms and munitions in addition to “providing expertise”.



Soleimani also played an integral role in organizing the crucial operation to retake the Iraqi city of Tikrit from ISIL.

In January 2015, Hadi Al-Ameri, the head of the Badr Organization in Iraq, said of him: “If Qassem Soleimani was not present in Iraq, former Iraqi Premier Haider al-Abadi would not be able to form his cabinet.”

■ Gen. Soleimani declares end of ISIL in Syria and Iraq

Back in November 2017, Soleimani issued a statement declaring the end of ISIL, as the Iraqi and Syrian armies, backed by popular forces and Iranian military advisors, managed to flush ISIL militants out of their last strongholds in both countries.

■ Reactions to Soleimani’s martyrdom

After his martyrdom a number senior Iranian, regional and international figures expressed their condolences over his assassination and talked about his personality.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Leader of Islamic Revolution, said, “He was a stellar example of those educated and nurtured in Islam and the school of Imam Khomeini. He spent his entire life engaging in jihad in the path of God.”

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed disgust at the American forces’ terrorist and criminal move to martyr the “honored commander of the army of Islam”.

“The malice and stupidity of American terrorist forces who assassinated General Soleimani, a hero martyr and a commander of the fight against terrorism and extremism, will undoubtedly further strengthen the tree of resistance in the region and the world,” Zarif went on to say.

Speaking on TV on Friday night, Zarif also called General Soleimani a “humble” and “moderate” person who avoided emotional behavior.

Former presidents Mohammad Khatami and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called General Soleimani the brave commander of Islam.

Mousavi Lari, who served as interior minister in the Khatami administration, said “sincerity” was Soleimani’s main cause of his popularity among all walks of the life.

President Rouhani, who had gone to Soleimani’s house to condole his family, said, “Soleimani was not only a military commander but also a politician and strategist.”

Rouhani said not only the Iranian nation, but also all Muslims and free-hearted people of the world are mourning the loss of the honorable commander.

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said,

“General Soleimani was a brilliant epitome and model of iron wills who was nurtured in the school of Islam.”

Judiciary Chief Ebrahim Ra’eisi said, “Hundreds of Soleimanis will rise to wreak havoc on the eyes of the U.S. terrorist government and international terrorism around the world.”

In the meantime, Mohammad Reza Aref, a top reformist figure and lawmaker, praised Soleimani’s personality and said the general enjoyed moral self-controlling behaviors in addition to his braveness.

Mostafa Mo’ein, a 2005 presidential candidate and a former science minister, compared General Soleimani with top historical figures like Amir Kabir, Mohammad Mosadeq, Lieutenant General Ali Sayad Shirazi, and Mostafa Chamran.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, stressed that the killing of Commander Qassem Soleimani violated the norms of international law.

U.S. Senator and 2020 presidential candidate Bernie Sanders also warned that the killing of Gen. Soleimani will destabilize the region and puts the U.S. on the path to another war.

U.S. Democratic leaders in both chambers of Congress expressed outrage over Trump’s ordered strike, saying the Republican president did not obtain congressional approval.

Mahmoud Dowlatabadi, a reformist minded Iranian writer, described General Soleimani as “the competent worthy son of Iran”.

Seyed Mahmoud Shahroudi, the Leader’s representative in Kurdistan province, said, “If martyr Soleimani was not at the scene, Damascus, Baghdad and the Iraqi Kurdistan had fallen into the hands of Daesh.”

The general was also placed on the list of top Global Thinkers in defense and security fields by Foreign Policy Magazine in 2019.

The Iran newspaper wrote on front page that “The Country Is Mourning for This Man”.

The front page of Sharq, a reformist newspaper, also read “Iran Is Mourning for This Man”.

Etemad, another reformist daily, headlined “The Sorrow of His Demise Is Not Imaginable”.

Writing in the Etemad newspaper published on Saturday, Ali Motahari, a leading independent lawmaker, said, “Following assassination of commander Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their colleagues, and Donald Trump’s words that ‘Washington is not after waging war’ is nothing but a sign of the U.S. president’s mental disorder.”

U.S. responsible for consequences of terror act on General Soleimani, Zarif tells Qatari FM

1 → Zarif and his Qatari counterpart also held a one-one meeting.

The Qatari official said that a “peaceful solution” should be found to reduce tension and restore peace to the region.

Lieutenant General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air-strike on Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning. The Pentagon announced that U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the attack on Soleimani.

Zarif also held separate phone conversations with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Afghanistan’s Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, Tajik Foreign Minister Siroddjдин Aslov and Mevlut Cavusoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, discussing regional issues.

Wang said that the U.S. dangerous behavior has led to increase in tension in the region.

He noted that China will play a constructive role in protecting peace and security in the region.

■ ‘Our people stronger and more determined than ever’

In a separate meeting with the Qatari foreign minister,



President Hassan Rouhani said that the United States will pay for assassination of General Soleimani.

IRGC: U.S. fearful of the scale of Iran’s revenge

with the national TV on Friday night.

He underlined that the resistance front is ready to take harsh revenge for the terrorist assassination at the best time and in the best possible way, adding that the Americans have resorted to diplomatic channels - through the Swiss embassy in Tehran which represents the U.S. interests in Iran - to ask Tehran to «give a proportionate response if it insists on reprisal, but the Americans are in no position to decide

about anything».

Elsewhere, General Fadavi noted that General Soleimani had traveled to Iraq at the invitation of the Iraqi officials, and said, «This time, Hajj Qassem had traveled from Syria to Iraq on a passenger plane which can be traced even in aviation websites.»

Lieutenant General Soleimani was martyred in a targeted assassination attack by the U.S. aircraft at Baghdad International Airport early

on Friday morning.

General Qassem Soleimani has been martyred by the U.S. aircraft after lifetime efforts, the IRGC said in a statement early Friday morning.

The airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), or Hashad al-Shaabi. The PMF media arm said the two were martyred in an American airstrike that targeted their vehicle on the road to the airport.

Iran to give ‘crushing response’ to U.S. criminal act: top MP

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has condemned the United States for assassinating Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, saying Iran will give a crushing response in due time but it won't start a war.

The Islamic Republic reserves the right to respond to the U.S. terrorist regime's criminal act and will give a decisive response in due time, Tasnim quoted Mojtaba Zonnour as saying.

He stressed that Iran does not act emotionally in response to the American crime, adding “Certainly, the Islamic Republic of Iran's action will be judicious and decisive ... and in a manner that will have the most benefits for the Iranian nation and the most damages to our enemies.”

“Our goal is purely (to take) revenge and we do not intend to wage war,” he said, adding that Iran has never waged any war as it has no interest in war.

General Soleimani, the deputy head of Iraq's



Hashd al-Sha'abi, and a number of their entourage were killed in an airstrike by American drones near the Baghdad International Airport in the early hours of Friday.

The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Soleimani, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of U.S. President Donald Trump.

In a message on Friday, President Hassan Rouhani said Soleimani's assassination will “double the determination of the great Iranian nation and other independent states to stand against America's excessive demands and to defend the Islamic values.”

“This cowardly act is, of course, another sign of America's frustration and helplessness in the region,” he added.

General Soleimani was one of the main figures in the fight against terrorism in the past several years in Iraq and Syria.

Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, have vowed that Iran will take revenge on the U.S. terrorist act.

Israel was involved in Soleimani assassination, says ex-IRGC chief

‘Trump will soon realize what a dangerous action he has taken’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — A former chief of the Islamic Revolution Guards (IRGC) has suggested that Israel was also involved in the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, warning Israel that it cannot hide from Iran.

“Israel should not think it can hide itself, because Iran's finger is also pointing toward Israel,” Mohsen Rezaee said on Friday evening, ISNA reported.

He said Trump is not competent enough to wage a war. “History has proven that he has not been competent enough to wage a war from the beginning,” he remarked.

The United States has taken a very big risk, Rezaee said, adding, “Trump will soon realize what a dangerous action he has taken.”

“Qassem Soleimani was Iran's son and there is no city or village in Iran which is not mourning,” the former IRGC chief said.

After this incident, Rezaee argued, pressure on the U.S. will increase and “our prediction is that the U.S. will have



to leave the region in the next 10 years and we will intensify our fights to drive the U.S. out of the region.”

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that General Soleimani and PMU deputy commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were martyred in an attack carried out by the U.S.

General Soleimani was a legendary commander in the fight against terrorism in Iraq and Syria.

Top Iranian leaders condemned the attack, saying a “tough revenge” awaits the United States.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei released a message on Friday saying Iran will take a “tough revenge” on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

“After years of sincere and courageous jihad against the devils and evil-doers of the world and after years of wishing for martyrdom in the path of God, alas, dear Soleimani attained this lofty station and his pure blood was spilled by the vilest of humans,” the Leader's message read.

Washington should abandon ‘unlawful tactics’, Lavrov says in reaction to Soleimani assassination

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has called on Washington to abandon “unlawful tactics”, pointing to the assassination of IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Lavrov made the remarks during a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Russian Foreign Ministry reported on Friday.

“They [Lavrov and Pompeo] have discussed the situation related to the murder of Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani by the U.S. military in an airstrike on the Baghdad airport,” the Russian ministry stated.

“Lavrov stressed that the purposeful actions of a UN member state on eliminating officials of another UN member state, especially on the territory of a third sovereign

state without giving it prior notice, blatantly violate the principles of international law and should be condemned.”

“The Russian minister has pointed out that this step by the U.S. is fraught with serious consequences for peace and security in the region and that it does not aid the efforts on finding solutions to difficult issues accumulated in the Middle East. On the contrary, it

leads to a new wave of escalation. Moscow urges Washington to abandon unlawful forceful tactics of achieving its goals on the international arena and to resolve any issues at the negotiating table,” the ministry added.

The Pentagon earlier confirmed that a missile strike near the Baghdad airport killed the head of the Quds Force Qassem Soleimani. The operation was carried out

at the direction of U.S. President Donald Trump, the statement said.

Washington blamed Soleimani for allegedly approving a rally outside the U.S. embassy in Baghdad earlier this week.

On Friday, U.S. drones struck a convoy carrying Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), on the Baghdad International Airport road.

Following Soleimani's assassination, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said those who assassinated the IRGC Quds Force commander must await a harsh revenge.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the “cruellest people on earth” assassinated the “honorable” commander who “courageously fought for years against the evils and bandits of the world.”

1→ This sequence of events led to Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani's presence in Baghdad and the opportunity for the US to assassinate him.

A Turning Point

The assassinations of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Commander al-Muhandis are a turning point not only in the Persian Gulf and Middle East but also in Eurasia generally. Severe retaliation from Muslim world against US and its allies is to be expected.

So, following the news of the unlawful assassination of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani's by the US I asked Mr. Chris Cook, Senior Research Fellow, University College London, about his views as to the significance of this tragic event, what Iran's response should be.

“I believe that this is a very rare event: an assassination of truly historic strategic significance and potential consequences. If Iran's response is smart and strategic, then I do not believe Soleimani will be seen to have died in vain.”

I asked Mr Cook to outline US strategy.

“As William Engdahl has written, the organising principle of US foreign policy for the last 100 years has been US energy security achieved through military and financial hegemony or dominance. President Obama pursued a smart strategy and strongly supported global institutions such as the UN. The US JCPOA rapprochement with Iran, strategic presence in Qatar and focus on the Southern Corridor energy route from the Caspian Sea were all predicated on a US “Transition through Gas” energy strategy to achieve a low carbon economy. Obama procured massive investment in US shale oil supported and funded through five years of oil market manipulation and which led to a successful outcome of US freedom from reliance on Saudi oil.”

I observed that Mr Cook has written a great deal about how President Trump announced the replacement of this Obama strategy with the ‘Energy Dominance’ strategy on 29th June 2017 which has now been implemented. How

A turning point



is this almost unprecedented assassination consistent with that strategy?

“Clearly elements in the US government have sought war with Iran throughout Trump's presidency, but the fact is Trump detests war. It seems to me that Bolton's departure from office followed failed military escalation in the Persian Gulf, and the recent episode in Iran following gasoline price increases clearly had Pompeo's CIA fingerprints all over it. But this assassination appears to me to be a purely po-

“The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the German government's stances in support of the U.S.'s cruel, unilateral and illegal acts as a contribution to these actions, and reminds the German government of the prominent role played by General Soleimani in the fight against the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group, whose survival would have endangered the lives of countless of innocent people even in Europe,” Mousavi added.

Following Soleimani's assassination, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

Seyyed Ali Khamenei said those who assassinated the IRGC Quds Force commander must await a harsh revenge.

Ayatollah Khamenei added that the “cruellest people on earth” assassinated the “honorable” commander who “courageously fought for years against the evils and bandits of the world.”

Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) also said in a statement that a harsh vengeance “in due time and right place” awaited criminals behind Soleimani's assassination.

Soleimani was official guest of Iraq: Judiciary

‘Iran will sue U.S. in international courts for terrorist attack on Gen. Soleimani’

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The spokesman for Iran's Judiciary said on Saturday that Tehran will sue the U.S. in international courts for its terrorist attack on the vehicle of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander, which ended in his martyrdom in the Baghdad airport on Friday morning.

“The Judiciary along with the Foreign Ministry and human rights staff will sue the U.S. in international courts for the terrorist attack,” Gholamhossein Esmaeili underscored.

The Judiciary spokesman added that Soleimani was officially invited by Iraqi officials.

“Martyr Soleimani was a high-ranking official guest in Iraq where an alien government forces (U.S. forces) are present and committed the crime.”

He further said, “We announce to the U.S. that they should not cheer about the silence of human rights bodies and certain mendacious human and international rights claimers.”

“Assassination of Commander Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and their colleagues is a terrorist act and a symbol of state terrorism from a legal point of view,” Esmaeili added.

The IRGC announced in a statement on Friday morning that General Soleimani was martyred in an attack carried out by U.S. helicopters.

Soleimani was a legendary commander in the fight against terrorists, especially Daesh, in Iraq and Syria.



‘Response to military action is military action’: Iranian UN envoy

Assassination of General Soleimani is an act of aggression in violation of intl. law, Takht-Ravanchi

By staff and agency

Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, has said that assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was “an illegitimate action” and “an act of aggression” in violation of international law.

In an interview with NBC News published on Saturday, he said, “Response to military action is military action. There will be harsh revenge. Where? When? How? I do not know, but definitely there will be some retaliation because it was an act of aggression by the United States and we cannot just close our eyes on what happened to a dear general of our armed forces.”

The ambassador clarified that retribution would not be aimed at American civilians. “What we have said is that this action by the U.S. government, by the U.S. administration, has its own consequences,” Ravanchi said. “They should bear the full responsibility of what will happen in the future.”

Elsewhere, he said, “The U.S. cannot claim that it is fighting terror when at the same time it is killing the champion of defeating terrorists in our region.”

He also said that although he believes the Trump administration «does not believe in dialogue,» Iran and the U.S. have exchanged letters through a Swiss emissary since news of the assassination broke late Thursday.

Lieutenant General Soleimani was assassinated along with several senior members of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), including its deputy chief Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, in the early hours of Friday, January 3, at Baghdad's international airport.

The Pentagon announced that U.S. President Donald Trump had ordered the attack on Soleimani.

Iran will take harsh but not hasty revenge: Armed Forces

TEHRAN (MNA) — Spokesman of the Iranian Armed Forces Brigadier General Abolfazl Shekarchi announced on Saturday that Iran will respond to the U.S. move in assassinating IRGC's Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani but will avoid taking any hasty action.

General Shekarchi said Iran will avoid taking any hasty action but will take a tough revenge from the U.S., as the Iranian and regional nations besides the Leader of the Islamic Republic desire.

He reiterated that Iran will take a tough revenge from the U.S., as the Iranian and regional nations besides the Leader of the Islamic Republic desire.

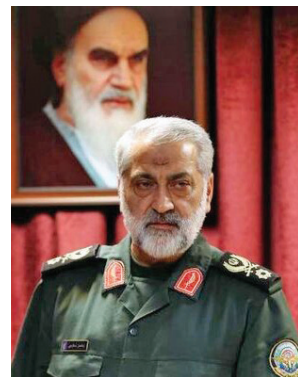
It is the Islamic Republic's right to respond to assassination of General Soleimani by the U.S. and will do that for sure, he noted.

“In case of [Iran-U.S.] war or any confrontation, Americans will suffer severe damage and if they do any madness, Iran's response would be tougher,” he said.

The Spokesperson elaborated that “Americans have taken an irreversible step.”

The United States terrorist forces assassinated General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) — better known as Hashd al-Sha'abi — in an attack at Baghdad's international airport early on Friday. The Pentagon said in a statement that U.S. President Donald Trump had ordered the attack.

General Soleimani's body will be transferred to Iran on Monday to be buried in his hometown, Kerman.



STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	367334.0
IFX	4797.17

Sources: tse.ir, ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,866 rials
GBP	54,956 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$68.60/b
WTI	\$63.05/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.15/b
Gold	\$1,554.00/oz
Silver	\$18.12/oz
Platinum	\$986.40/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

‘Martyr Soleimani, a model not only in military but in economic battle’

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iranian Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani said that the method, strategies and approaches of Martyr Soleimani were not a model only in the military resistance but also in our economic battle, IRIB reported.



Martyr Qassem Soleimani

Soleimani was among the key figures in the fight against terrorism in Syria and Iraq in the past several years.

“We should learn from him and continue his way. He acted bravely in any field of battle, so his actions should be documented to be preserved and offered to the next generations”, the minister emphasized.

Losing such admirable person is a disaster, but his martyrdom will promote his lofty ideas and approaches more and more in the society, Rahmani added.

IRGC Quds Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on Friday.

Stock market closes down on Saturday

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — On Saturday, the first day of the Iranian calendar week, Iran’s stock market wrapped up with some drops, IRNA reported.

TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), fell 16,765 to 367,334 on Saturday.

Some 6.924 billion securities worth 30.415 trillion rials (about \$427 million) were reportedly traded at TSE.

As previously announced, TEDPIX rose 49,000 points, or 16.7 percent, to stand at 353,997 points at the end of the past Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).



Reportedly, some 82.215 billion securities worth 432.151 trillion rials (about \$10.29 billion) were traded through 10.153 million deals at TSE during the previous month, with growth of 61 percent and 76 percent in the number and value of traded securities, respectively, while 71 percent rise in the number of deals.

Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), also witnessed drop in its index on Saturday.

IFX, the main index of IFB, fell 223 points to 4,797.

Some 1.214 billion securities worth 9.176 trillion rias (about \$218.4 million) were traded at IFB on Saturday.

IFX rose 15 percent in the past Iranian calendar month of Azar, while experiencing a 102-percent rise since the beginning of current Iranian calendar year (March 21, 2019).

The index stood at 4,559 points at the end of the past month. Value of trades at IFB rose 16 percent in the previous month and 85 percent since the year start.

Tehran hosting intl. expo on airport, related industries

1 → The four-day event is mainly aimed at boosting cooperation between the producers and service offering units of the airport sector, and offers a platform through which the visitors will get acquainted with achievements of the country’s aviation industry.

As reported, 26 knowledge-based companies along with numerous other exhibitors are showcasing latest achievements, ideas and projects in this year’s event.

Iran’s exports to Eurasia rising after preferential trade pact

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Head of the Export Promotion Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and agriculture (ICCIMA) says the exports of some highly-demanded goods to Eurasia has been facilitated after implementation of a preferential trade deal with Iran, and the volume of trade is rising for these items.

“However, the trade for other commodity groups is still low and the exchange processes are slow,” Jamshid Nafar told IRNA.

He further noted that a preferential trade deal is like a bargain, the two sides should negotiate in order to come up with a mutual agreement about the items they want to export or import.

“It is normal for some items, which are more demanded, the trade processes go through faster and more easily,” Nafar added.

Mentioning the free trade deal between Iran and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which came into force in October 27, the official said: “of course this pact is still new and there are some issues at the beginning of implementing any new program, but the industry and economy ministries



should support the traders and the program to go through smoothly.”

There is a center in the Trade Promotion Organization which is established for monitoring Eurasia trade problems. Exporters

need to be in direct contact with this center and report their issues, so that the relevant government agencies or the private sector representatives could resolve them, he said. Last month, head of Islamic Republic of

Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) said the value of Iran’s preferential trade with Eurasian countries reached \$194.2 million since the trade agreement was implemented on October 27 up to the end of November.

In the mentioned period Iran exported \$28.2 million worth of commodities to the EAEU nations while importing \$166 million of commodities through preferential trade, Mehdi Mirashrafi said.

After several years of negotiations, Iran and EAEU reached a free trade agreement in early 2019 and the agreement officially came into force in late October.

Based on this agreement, about 840 commodity items are subject to preferential tariffs, which means tariffs on some goods are reduced and for some commodities, tariffs are levied.

Iran is a very important market in the region and development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members.

Signing the free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

Industrial unit establishment permits up 15.8% in 8 months

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — According to the latest data released by Iran’s Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry, during the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21–November 22, 2019), 17,054 licenses were issued for establishing new industry units which marks a 15.8-percent increase year on year.

As reported by IRNA, 1.87 quadrillion rials (about \$44.5 billion) was invested for the construction of these units which shows a 10.6 percent decline compared to the same period last year.

The new units are expected to create job opportunities for 394,921 people, 14.2 percent more than the figure for last year’s eight-month time span.

In the mentioned period, also 3,960 licenses were issued for newly established industrial units to start operation.

The number of such licenses also increased 3.9 percent year on year.

Over 245 trillion rials (about \$5.85 bil-



lion) was invested in this newly established units, 36.3 percent less than that of the previous year.

According to the ministry data, during the first seven months of the current calendar year (March 21–October 22, 2019), 12,808 licenses were issued for establishing new industry units, 22 percent more than last year’s seven months.

Most of the issued licenses were for foodstuff production units followed by units for production and processing of non-metallic minerals.

Govt. to raise cigarette taxes by 28% next year

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** – The Iranian National Tax Administration (INTA) is going to increase the taxes imposed on cigarette sales by 28 percent in the upcoming Iranian calendar year (starts on March 20, 2020), IRIB reported, quoting an official with the organization.

According to the ITNA’s spokesman, Amir Zamani, the government is expected to earn 20.01 trillion rials (about \$476.5 million) from cigarette tax in the next calendar year, 33 percent more than the expected figure for the current year which is set at 15 trillion rials (about \$357 million) based on the country’s Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan.

The official noted that the cigarette tax revenues have exceeded the figure set in the sixth development plan by about 10 percent in the current year, reaching 16.5 trillion rials (about \$392.8 million).

Based on the budget bill, the government also intends to earn 8.08 trillion rials (about \$192.5 million) from imposing tax on cigarette imports next year.

President Hassan Rouhani submitted the



government’s budget bill to the parliament in early December 2019.

The proposed budget amounted to about 19.88 quadrillion rials (about \$473.3 billion at the official rate of 42,000 rials), with a 14-percent rise from the current year’s approved budget.

Based on the budget bill, tax incomes are predicted to be 1.95 quadrillion rials (about \$46.42 billion), rising 27 percent from 1.72 quadrillion rials (about \$40.95 billion) envisaged in the present year’s budget.

In the face of the U.S. sanctions and the decline in the oil revenues, taxation is considered one of the main sources of revenues for the Iranian government next year.

Cement, clinker exports from Iran up 22% in 8 months yr/yr

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Iran exported 11.4 million tons of cement and clinker in the first eight months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20- November 21), which was 22 percent higher than the figure for the same period of time in the past year, IRNA reported on Saturday, citing official data.

As reported, the share of clinker in the country’s cement products export basket has increased in the mentioned period which resulted in a decrease in the value of the export basket for each ton.

Based on the statistics, the average value of Iran’s cement products basket has decreased to \$18.3 per ton in the mentioned period, from last year’s \$33.9.

During the mentioned period, the clinker weight share of the total cement chain exports increased from 43 percent to 52 percent.

Iran exported cement products to 37 foreign destinations, 10 of which account-



ed for over 78 percent of the total exports.

With an annual production capacity of 87 million tons, Iran’s cement industry holds the world’s sixth place in terms of production capacity.

The country’s annual cement consumption stands at about 61 million tons and the annual exports of the commodity chain is over 11 million tons.

Neighboring countries are not only the consumers of Iranian cement but also they demand the transfer of cement industry’s technology to their countries.

Worth of trades at IME increases 73% in a week

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) rose 73 percent during the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), IME International Affairs and Public Relations Department announced.

Some 862,206 tons of commodities worth over \$928 million were traded at this market in the past week, and the volume of trades experienced a 62-percent growth.

Last week, on the domestic and export metal and mineral trading floor of IME, 327,835 tons of various products worth \$493 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 313,363 tons of steel, 4,770 tons of copper, 9,260 tons of aluminum, 120 tons of molybdenum concentrates, 12 tons of precious metal concentrates, 300 tons of zinc ingot and 10 tons of lead ingot as well as 21 kg of gold bullion were traded by customers.

The report declares that on domestic and export oil and petrochemical trading floors of IME, 533,460 tons of different

commodities with the total value of \$436 million were traded.

On this trading floor, 158,821 tons of bitumen, 21,300 tons of VB feed stock, 75,982 tons of polymer products, 17,060 tons of lube cut oil, 35,132 tons of chemical products, 2,000 tons of slaps waxes, 674 tons of insulation, 2,300 tons of base oil, as well as 29,115 tons of sulfur were traded.

Furthermore, 910 tons of commodities were traded on the side market of IME.

As previously reported, the value of trades at IME rose 26 percent to reach 135 trillion rials (about \$3.2 billion) during the ninth Iranian calendar month of Azar (ends on December 21).

Some 2.851 million tons of commodities were reportedly traded at this market in the mentioned month to experience a growth of 16 percent.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran’s over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

European factory activity in a flux, ends 2019 on bad note



Factories across the eurozone ended 2019 in poor shape with activity contracting for an 11th consecutive month, according to a survey which suggested the start of the New Year is unlikely to see any improvement.

IHS Markit’s final manufacturing Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) has been below the 50 mark separating growth from contraction since February, and at 46.3 in December it was below November’s 46.9 but higher than a preliminary estimate of 45.9.

An index measuring output, which feeds into a composite PMI that is seen as a good gauge of economic health, sank to 46.1 from 47.4.

“Eurozone manufacturers reported a dire end to 2019, with output falling at a rate not exceeded since 2012,” said Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit.

“Although firms grew somewhat more optimistic about the year ahead, a return to growth remains a long way off given that new order inflows continued to fall at one of the fastest rates seen over the past seven years.”

The index measuring new orders dipped to 46.6 from 46.7 and as they did all last year, firms turned to completing backlogs of work to stay active. Also indicating they don’t expect an imminent improvement, purchases of raw materials were reduced and staffing levels cut.

■ The bloc’s largest economy

In Germany, the bloc’s largest economy, its export-dependent manufacturing sector contracted further in December as the

rate of decline in production accelerated for the first time in three months, but output expectations rose slightly.

IHS Markit’s PMI for manufacturing, which accounts for about a fifth of the economy, fell to 43.7 in December from November’s five-month high of 44.1.

The final December reading was slightly above a flash reading of 43.4, but remained below the 50.0 mark separating growth from contraction for the 12th month in a row.

“Germany’s manufacturing sector closed out 2019 with another weak performance and remains a thorn in the side of the economy,” said Phil Smith, principal economist at IHS Markit. “Sustained cuts to workforce numbers at factories continue to pose a threat to Germany’s so-far solid consumer spending,” he added.

British factory output fell in December at the fastest rate since 2012 as a tepid global economy hurt demand and businesses further reduced stocks of goods they had built up in case of a no-deal Brexit.

The output gauge in the IHS Markit/CIPS UK Manufacturing PMI fell to 45.6 from 49.1 in November, its lowest since July 2012.

“With demand weak and confidence remaining subdued, input purchasing was pared back sharply and jobs were cut for the ninth successive month,” said Rob Dobson, an economist at IHS Markit.

■ Spain’s manufacturing sector

Spain’s manufacturing sector contracted for the seventh month in a row in December, with production falling at its fastest rate since April 2013, weighed down by political and economic uncertainty at home and abroad. Markit’s PMI of manufacturing companies edged down to 47.4 last month from 47.5 in November.

In Italy, manufacturing activity declined for a 15th month running in December and at the steepest rate for almost seven years, suggesting the economy will continue to struggle in the near term. The IHS Markit PMI fell to 46.2 from 47.6 in November, falling further below the 50 mark and posting the lowest reading since April 2013.

Polish manufacturing activity slipped again in December. The IHS Markit PMI for manufacturing rose to 48.0 from 46.7 in November.

(Source: khaleejtimes.com)

‘Developing renewables industry requires govt. support’

E N E R G Y TEHRAN — Director d e s k General of the Office of Economic, Social and Environmental Studies at Iran’s Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Organization (known as SATBA) says the country’s renewables industry needs government support to reach the desired level of development, IRNA reported on Saturday.

“Renewables industry’s current situation indicates that there is a lot of backlog in this sector and that it needs government support. Of course, the government support cannot last forever, so the renewable power plants, themselves, must have more economic justification to expand,” Reza Samadi said.

According to the official, the country’s total power generation capacity currently stands at 85 gigawatts (GW), at least four gigawatts of which should be supplied by renewable power plants based on the country’s Sixth Five-Year National Development Plan.

“However, currently the total capacity of the country’s renewable power plants stands at 800 megawatts,” Samadi added.

For an oil rich country like Iran which is mostly relied on oil, development of renewable



industry is a lot harder than other nations.

According to Samadi, in Iran the fuel for thermal power plants is completely supplied by the government for free and they don’t

even make any payments for damaging the environment, so the newly established renewable power plants cannot compete with these hugely-supported plants.

“Development of renewable industry requires special government support because selling the electricity produced with renewable power plants at the same rate as the electricity produced by fossil-fueled plants won’t be economically justifiable,” he explained.

Renewables, including hydropower, account for just six percent of energy generation, versus natural gas’ 90 percent share.

Overall, in the next five years, Iran is aiming for a 5,000 MW increase in renewable capacity to meet growing domestic demand and expand its presence in the regional electricity market.

According to SATBA, the number of small scale solar power plants across the country which are used by households or small industries is being increased noticeably as Iranian households and small industries have embraced the new technology with open arms and investors also seem eager for more contribution in this area.

Head of SATBA Seyed Mohammad Sadegzadeh has announced that Iran also plans to add electricity generated from renewable sources to the export basket.

Oil companies in Iraq maintain output despite raised security risk: sources

International oil companies are maintaining normal production in Iraq so far but have evacuated some staff and stepped up security following the assassination of a key Iranian general, oil field sources told S&P Global Platts Friday.

The oil ministry also said the “situation is normal across all oil fields in Iraq and exports and production operations are unaffected,” but added that employees with US citizenship and who work with oil companies in south Iraq left “at the request of their government.”

The oil field sources said that the withdrawal of the few staff concerned wouldn’t affect operations, which were continuing normally, but that there was a great deal of apprehension, with all the IOCs and their foreign contractors monitoring the security situation closely.

ExxonMobil, which operates the West Qurna 1 field, is evacuating the remaining 17 daily rate expats still there, leaving the fields with Iraqi staff only, the sources said. The bulk of their US staff continue to work from the UAE since their previous evacuation in June.

Tensions between Iraq and ExxonMobil flared up last year when the company decided to move some of its staff from Iraq temporarily due to heightened security concerns. Iraq denied there was any material change in the security situation, and the government said at the time that it was not happy with ExxonMobil’s decision. ExxonMobil was not immediately available for comment.

The sources added that other companies, such as BP, were evacuating the few US staff remaining. BP was not immediately available for comment.

Analysts said the situation bears close



watching as oil fields and ports could be vulnerable to escalating tensions in the region.

“At a minimum American citizens and institutions in the region are at imminent risk. US energy companies operating in Iraq could certainly be targeted in reprisal attacks,” global head of commodity strategy at RBC Capital Markets Helima Croft said.

Iraq, OPEC’s second-largest producer, has endured recent violent demonstrations between citizens and the government since October, particularly in the oil-rich southern province of Basra. Demonstrators have demanded more economic development and jobs. The southern oil field of Nasiriyah that was shut down for a day on December 29 by protesters without disrupting production, according to the ministry.

Iraq pumped an average of 4.73 million b/d of crude from January to November last year, according to Platts OPEC Survey. This is more than 200,000 b/d above its 4.51 million b/d quota under the previous agreement by a coalition of OPEC and other oil producers, or OPEC+.

Under the new agreement that runs through March 2020, Iraq will have to cut a further 50,000 b/d to comply with the new OPEC+ pact.

(Source: Platts)

Is this the future of solar?

Earlier this month, many of the world’s leading experts and authorities on climate change and clean energy met at the United Nations’ Climate Change Conference COP25 in Madrid to discuss the state of the world and the strategy going forward to combat catastrophic climate change.

There the UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the gathered delegates and experts that “By the end of the coming decade we will be on one of two paths. One is the path of surrender, where we have sleep walked past the point of no return, jeopardizing the health and safety of everyone on this planet. Do we really want to be remembered as the generation that buried its head in the sand that fiddled while the planet burned? The other option is the path of hope.”

So far, however, there has been a major hurdle in the race to 100% renewable energy -- funding. While there are many scientists and research teams toiling tirelessly at finding a silver-bullet solution -- or at least something close to that -- to making cheap energy as cheap and efficient as fossil fuels, there has been a major shortage of funding as compared to what would realistically be needed to make the sort of global energy transition necessary to leave most of the world’s proven fossil fuels in the ground -- a step that would be essential to avoiding catastrophic climate change according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world’s leading experts on the subject matter at hand.

Despite the bottleneck, however, there are still some clean energy tech advances being made, and a recent breakthrough in solar could have some seriously disruptive potential. Just this month, a research team at the University of Central Florida published findings that combine Artificial Intelligence

and solar power to create a new way to “make generating energy from the sun even more ubiquitous by creating a spray coating that can be used on bridges, houses, or even skyscrapers so they can be energy self-sufficient,” according to reporting from DesignNews.

■ The consumable energy

According to the report from UFC, the team of researchers used “Machine Learning, aka Artificial Intelligence to optimize the materials used to make perovskite solar cells (PSC). The Organic-Inorganic halide perovskites material used in PSC converts photovoltaic power into consumable energy.” This could be big. Getting technical, the University reports that “These perovskites can be processed in solid or liquid state, offering a lot of flexibility. Imagine being able to spray or paint bridges, houses and skyscrapers with the material, which would then capture light, turn it into energy and feed it into the electrical grid. Until now, the solar cell industry has relied on silicon because of its efficiency. But that’s old technology with limits. Using perovskites, however, has one big barrier. They are difficult to make in a usable and stable material. Scientists spend a lot of time trying to find just the right recipe to make them with all the benefits -- flexibility, stability, efficiency and low cost. That’s where artificial intelligence comes in.”

AI has the ability to solve the complex problems raised by perovskite cells at a rate that would not otherwise be possible by a team of human scientists, no matter how dogged or intelligent, paving the way for a future in which solar panels would not have to be manufactured, but in which virtually any surface could be converted into an emissions-free solar energy powerhouse by spraying on solar cells.

(Source: oilprice.com)

What will happen to oil if there is another war?

By Nell Mackenzie

Mitch Kahn remembers how, when fighting began in the second war in Iraq, prices for U.S. crude oil spiked \$10 per barrel overnight.

That would have meant a profit of \$50,000 if a trader had made the smallest purchasing trade possible. Or, just as big a loss if the trader had decided to sell.

Mr. Kahn was working as an independent trader on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) on Vesey Street in downtown Manhattan, where crude oil, gas and heating oil were traded downstairs and precious metals were traded upstairs.

In 2004, when the second war in Iraq broke out, prices were decided by open outcry: the shouts and yells of (mostly) men who stood in a ring. Some bought, some sold, the price settled between what sellers and buyers were offering.

The ring got so loud that several traders wore earplugs, Mr. Kahn says. But for him, the adrenaline was enough to keep his hearing clear.

While trading today is 24-hours, in 2004, when the bell buzzed at 14:30 EST, the market shut.

That day in 2004, when the market opened, the trader on his right began to shout.

■ The oil market collapsed

He remembers the trader next to him trying to sell some oil, “and the market collapsed.”

Within minutes, a barrel of oil was \$20 cheaper. But that is less likely to happen today.

“Markets move differently now,” he says.

In fact, Mr. Kahn points out, despite Friday’s price spike, everything about the oil markets are different today than the last time war started in Iraq.

Places it is produced, the way it is refined and how it is traded bear no resemblance to oil he was working with when his adrenaline carried him through screaming price moves of the past.

The price of Brent crude vaulted more than 4% to hit \$69.50 a barrel on Friday.

Oil prices swung on news that Iranian General Qasem Soleimani was killed in a U.S. drone strike at Baghdad airport,



which the Pentagon described as “defensive action.”

Stock prices of BP and Royal Dutch Shell both rose around the 1.5%.

The single biggest factor that changes the game in oil from 2004 to now, says Michael Widmer, a commodities strategist at Bank of America, is that the U.S. makes enough oil to be independent.

The U.S. is no longer reliant on crude from the Middle East. The “rules have changed materially,” says Mr. Widmer. The drone attacks on the Saudi Arabian oil plants in September serve as a good example.

“This is one of the biggest ever hits to the global oil market, in terms of supply and it had no sustained impact,” he says.

■ The market surged

That day the market surged almost \$10 a barrel, but not much happened in the aftermath.

While tensions rose on the political scene with terse rhetoric flying between Iran and the U.S. and a plan to deploy new sanctions, oil slid back down to below \$60 a barrel a fortnight later.

But the sour political discourse outlasted any fears of price disruption.

That is because more countries, notably Russia and the U.S., are pumping out oil now.

OPEC, the cartel of mainly Middle Eastern countries which

used to control much of the supply of oil, no longer holds the same sway.

“Now when OPEC cuts its production numbers, it just makes more breathing space for other countries to increase theirs,” says Mr. Widmer.

Alan Gelder, head of Wood Mackenzie’s marketing and research team, says one way to look at it is that OPEC used to produce half the world’s oil, but now makes less than a third of it.

In the Persian Gulf War, which began in 1990, oil came from two places. Either it was made by OPEC, or it was produced in places considered expensive and risky, like the North Sea.

■ Finding oil 40 years ago

Finding oil and getting it out of the ground from the ocean, especially 40 years ago, was an unpredictable and dangerous affair.

Now, because of the fracking done in North America, there is a glut of oil.

“Back then, commodity markets were just getting established. There are lots more participants in the market now,” says Mr. Gelder.

And far more information is available today than it was five years ago, he adds.

When Saudi Arabian producers were attacked last September, satellite imagery of ships leaving port and the plants themselves, showed that production restarted quickly and exports had resumed.

“Years ago, people would be frantically calling one another, trying to figure out what was going on,” he says.

At the moment OPEC and other oil producing companies like Russia have agreed to hold back on pumping out as much oil as they can.

That makes it particularly difficult to know what will happen to the price of oil as tensions rise in the Middle East.

In the short term, analysts at Citibank expect prices to stay high on retaliation fears.

Attacks on U.S. oil company pipelines, or where Western and American oil companies have invested in new exploration, would drive crude higher.

Any resolution of the conflict between Iran and the U.S. will de-escalate the situation and prices will deflate, they say.

(Source: bbc.com)

Renewable corporate power deals soar tenfold in Europe: study

By Christopher Hopson

Increased pressure on corporations over their green credentials and a phase-out of government incentives sent the number of renewable power purchase agreements (PPAs) in Europe soaring more than tenfold in six years, according to global law firm DLA Piper.

Research carried out by the firm, using data from inspiratia, shows the number of green PPA deals signed in Europe increased from just four in 2013 to more than 45 as of July last year. Since 2013 inspiratia’s database has recorded more than 18GW of subsidy-free projects, which have either signed a PPA with a utility/energy trader, or a corporate.

In its report, Europe’s subsidy-free transition: the road to grid parity, DLA Piper says while the shift towards renewables was enabled by governments through support mechanisms such as feed-in-tariffs, the baton has now passed into the hands of the private sector.



The report says a transition to subsidy-free projects led by Sweden, Norway and the UK is now being closely followed by promising deal flows in Spain and Italy. Countries such as Germany, Portugal and France are at an earlier phase of activity.

“Corporates across the globe have been under increasing pressure from consumers and investors to green their businesses leading them to radically change the way they purchase electricity, either as signatories of PPAs or even, in many cases, as owners of renewables projects,” said the law firm.

“Renewables projects have blossomed around the world in the last decade driven primarily by government subsidies. Europe has been at the forefront of this transition.

■ On the basis of grid-parity

“However, this phase of the transition to renewables is set to come to an end as capital costs have declined sufficiently to enable such projects to be economically viable on the basis of grid-parity with fossil fuels in several European markets.”

DLA Piper added that solar PV is the most notable success story when it comes to the role that capital cost reductions have played in reducing the levelized cost of energy in the renewables sector.

Though common in onshore wind, the shift to PPAs is only starting to emerge in the offshore sector with Orsted pioneering the concept in February 2019 via a ten-year deal with UK utility Northumbrian Water to offtake power from the 573MW Race Bank project off England.

Last month the Danish wind giant inked a ten-year deal with German high-tech materials specialist Covestro which will buy production from the planned Borkum Riffgrund 3 offshore wind project in the North Sea. Covestro will offtake 100MW of the wind farm’s total 900MW capacity.

Europe has been slower than the U.S. in taking up corporate PPAs, according to DLA Piper.

But industry body WindEurope has said corporate sourcing of renewables is now rising rapidly, with 7.5GW of PPA deals signed over the past five years, and 1.6GW worth by October 2019 alone, by when it estimated that some 13 European countries had inked agreements.

“At first glance it may appear that the role of policymaking would take a back seat with a subsidy-free and market-driven environment,” said Natasha Luther-Jones, DLA Piper global co-chair of energy and natural resources.

“However, governments and regulators still have a clear role to play in a grid-parity world. For example, regulators still have the power to affect investment decisions through market design, tax frameworks, and grid legislation.”

(Source: rechargenews.com)

Wind energy in Spain, Villar Mir Energía plans to launch a wind farm in Palencia

Villar Mir Energía has just put into operation the Tablares and Sotillo wind farms, in the province of Zaragoza, which total 27 megawatts (MW) and have been carried out without a premium and without auction, and also plans to launch the Santa María de Fuentes (Palencia) wind power plant.

The estimated annual production of these wind turbines parks is between 80,000 and 90,000 megawatt hours (MWh), equivalent to the electricity consumption of 26,000 homes.

The wind turbines parks, whose construction has been co-ordinated by Villar Mir Energía, are located, including their evacuation lines, in the municipalities of Lumpiaque, Rueda de Jalón and Plasencia de Jalón, and have been launched three months ahead of schedule.

The project has involved more than 500 people and 125 companies, most of them in Aragon.

The wind farms will participate in the electricity market and in the adjustment services markets managed by the system operator, Red Eléctrica de España (REE).

Siemens Gamesa has supplied the wind turbines and the financing has been carried out with Triodos Bank and Rive Investment.

Villar Mir Energía plans to begin the expansion works of the Valiente wind farm in Gurrea de Gállego (Huesca) at the end of 2020, with a capacity exceeding 100 megawatts (MW).

It will also build the wind farm of Santa María de las Fuentes (Palencia), of 100 MW, and three more in Galicia with a combined power of 92 MW.

The CEO of Villar Mir Energía, María Luisa Huidobro, has requested that, in order to develop the planned investments in new wind energy and hydroelectric projects for the coming years (more than 1,000 MW), the procedures be facilitated by the Administration and REE.

Huidobro has proposed to automate the processes of registration in the registries and of access and connection in the networks, as well as to lighten the guarantees, which he considers very high, at the time of obtaining the authorizations.

(Source: evwind.es)

Anger and outrage over Gen. Soleimani's killing

By Huda Z

PAKISTAN — On Friday, the 3rd of January, the streets of almost every Iranian city witnessed floods of angry people protesting and chanting vociferous slogans over the brutal assassination of the Iranian national hero, General Qassem Soleimani.

"Their (America's) celebration is short-lived," said a woman participant of the protests in Tehran as recorded by Channel 2. "The day that we pray in Masjid al-Aqsa (Jerusalem), that day the blood of Qasem Soleimani will have been avenged."

Angry protestors filled up the streets of Tehran, Khorasan, and Kerman among other provinces, with posters of Soleimani and chants of "revenge, revenge!"

"He (Soleimani) is alive. He remains with us in our hearts," said another woman, with eyes full of tears. Memorials and candles were placed in almost every shop and every alley of Tehran, and a three-day public mourning was declared throughout the country.



In what was said to be a retaliation for the attack on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, airstrikes were launched by the U.S. army on the direct orders of President Donald Trump, targeting the IRGC's Quds Force Head Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Unit (PMU) among six others.

It must be noticed that Tehran had denied any involvement in the attack on the U.S. embassy, with the Supreme Leader Grand Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei calling it a result of America's crimes in Iraq. The Supreme Leader's statement was backed up by a video of the Iraqi people shouting slogans outside of the U.S. embassy. "Allah is Great, U.S. is the Great Satan!" shouted a group of Iraqi civilians outside the embassy.

As soon as the news of attack spread on the internet, angry Iranians took to Twitter, calling for revenge. "Order coffins for your soldiers," commented an Iranian user under Donald Trump's latest tweet. "Light it on ... fire," retweeted Hoda Katebi, an Iranian-American activist in response to the American flag tweeted by Donald Trump as the news of the assassination broke. "I have no words," she said, fearing an uncontrollable war in the region.

However, it was not only Iranian users who were disgusted by this authoritarian decision taken by the U.S. President. "When are your children enlisting in the army?" commented an American user, as fears of loss of American troops and immense damage arose with the spirit of revenge.

To the Iranians, Gen. Soleimani was not just the head of the Quds Force, but also the man who was in the forefront fighting the ISIS. To the Iranians, it meant that he was the one who re-opened the gates of Syria and Iraq for the Shi'a Muslims for pilgrimage to the holy shrines situated in these countries.

With the advent of ISIS and Muslim fears of demolition of religious sites in the two countries, the IRGC was officially invited to help retake control. Since then, over a period of almost six years, the threat of ISIS was diminished to nothing – Soleimani being on the frontline. He, therefore, became the only recipient of the Islamic Republic of Iran's highest military honor, the Order of Zolfaghar for his chivalry in the battlefield against the ISIS.

The aftermath of his murder could mean anything from war to destruction of American interests in the region, but exactly how much destruction it will bring, only time will reveal.

Iranians view the killing of Soleimani as an act of war: Paul Pillar

➔ ■ U.S. Action on Assassination of General Soleimani On the other hand, it shows that the war with Iran is important for the U.S. at the present moment. What is your assessment?

A: President Trump is telling the truth when he says he does not want more wars in the Middle East, including against Iran. But Trump often does not understand the nature and consequences of his own actions. Iranians view the killing of Soleimani as an act of war. Trump probably views it as an act short of war.

■ What is your assessment of Iran's response to this, given the message of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who announced that he would take tough revenge on the U.S.?

A: Iran certainly will strike back forcefully--not just because of what the Supreme Leader said, but because of how prominent a figure Soleimani was for Iranians generally. Iran will strike back in ways and at times of its own choosing, but this may include attempts to assassinate a U.S. public figure with standing in the United States comparable to the standing Soleimani had in Iran.

■ The UN Special reporter described the assassination of General Soleimani as a violation of international law. What is your assessment?

A: It is hard to argue against that description, given that the assassination involved an armed attack inside Iraq, against Iranian and Iraqi citizens, without the involvement or permission of the Iraqi government.

America shoots itself in the foot

➔ ■ Moreover, such miscalculated measures that were planned and executed without the consultation of affected parties has most certainly opened the battle on many fronts in the region, rather than simply with Iran.

The undeniable reality of the situation is that the PMF and Quds Forces not only eradicated ISIS in the region but posed the greatest strategic threat to their survival. The absence or weakening of a strong resistance front against ISIS, Al-Qaeda and other foreign backed terrorist groups will put the whole region, including European security at risk.

If the PMF is weakened due to the execution of its prominent commanders by U.S. orders, America will have succeeded in re-nurturing ISIS and their likes, as it is crushing the main active forces on the ground that have led to their defeat, thus illustrating how the U.S. has no interest in defeating terrorism but on imposing its control and fulfilling what it perceives to be its interests in the region.

The writer is a university student and human rights activist based in the UK.

U.S. assassination of top Iranian military official may ignite World War

By Caitlin Johnstone

The US has admitted to assassinating Iran's most beloved military leader, General Qassem Soleimani, in a drone strike which seems very likely to ignite a full-scale war. Six others are also reported killed, including Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

According to the Pentagon, Trump personally ordered the assassination. I'll keep following this hugely important story and will probably be writing a lot about it as it unfolds. I encourage everyone who values peace and humanity to follow it as well.

"Spoke to a very knowledgeable person about what Iran's response to Soleimani's assassination might be," The Quincy Institute's Trita Parsi tweeted regarding this developing story. "This would be the equivalent of Iran assassinating Petreus or Mattis, I argued. No, he responded, this is much bigger than that."

Pentagon out with a statement on the airstrike.

"This strike was aimed at deterring future Iranian attack plans. The United States will continue to take all necessary action to protect our people and our interests wherever they are around the world."

"Most Americans won't understand the gravity of this," tweeted journalist Rania Khalek. "Qasem Soleimani is head of the Iranian IRGC's elite Quds Force, which conducts operations outside of Iran in both Iraq and Syria. He was credited with helping turn the tide in both countries against Al-Qaeda and ISIS."

"This is very serious," Khalek added. "The US essentially declared war on Iran by assassinating its most revered military figure in Iraq. And by also killing the head of the PMF, the US created more enemies in Iraq. There will be regional retaliation. It's unlikely it can be prevented."

"If true, it is not an understatement to say this could change the entire Middle East," tweeted Rising's Saagar Enjeti.

"There's going to be that war now that people have been pushing for since tanking the Iran Deal," tweeted The Intercept's Murtaza Mohammad Hussain.

"If this is true, the US has effectively declared war on Iran, which has established militarily ties with Russia and China. It's not hyperbole to say this could start WW3. Insane," tweeted Grayzone's Dan Cohen, who also highlighted the important fact that "Iran, Russia and China held joint naval drills less than a week ago."

"Iranian sources in Iran are warning that killing Gen. Qasem Sulaimani spells war," tweeted Farnaz Fassihi of The New York Times. "Official reaction will begin with a strike," one says."

A proportionate retaliatory strike would necessarily entail an attack on US military targets, or the military targets of US allies. If that happens, either the empire stands down or we're looking at an all-out war of a size that is potentially almost limitless.

Iranian sources in Iran are warning that killing Gen.



Qasem Sulaimani spells war.

■ "Official reaction will begin with a strike," one says. #Iraq

Months after Donald Trump took office it was reported that the CIA had escalated covert operations in Iran, and the administration has been escalating tensions with that nation further and further ever since it announced its withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 on completely false pretenses. The withdrawal was followed by waves of debilitating, civilian-starving sanctions implemented with the goal of provoking civil unrest, a goal Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has openly admitted. From there we saw increased US military presence in the region, then the Iraqi-killing airstrikes earlier this week and the resulting tense angry standoff at the US embassy in Baghdad, and now here we are with Iran planning retaliation for an unforgivable assassination on its most senior and revered military official.

Many are understandably claiming that this geostrategically pivotal confrontation was precisely what Trump was installed to facilitate all along. The largest donor to any campaign in 2016 was oligarch Sheldon Adelson, who gave \$25 million to the Trump campaign, and who in 2013 said that the US should drop a nuclear bomb on Iran. After Trump's election win, Adelson gave another \$5 million to his inauguration, the largest single presidential inaugural donation ever made. Newt Gingrich, another of the billionaire's hired politicians, has said

that Adelson's "central value" is Israel.

Make no mistake, Iran is not Iraq or Libya. A full-scale war against Iran would be many times more deadly, costly and destabilizing than those interventions; the UK's Admiral Lord West told The Daily Star Online last year that winning such a war would require no less than a million troops, or nearly the total number of active duty US military personnel in the entire world. Even if a direct war with Iran didn't lead to a confrontation with China, Russia and the other unabsorbed allies, it would still be worse than Vietnam and Iraq combined in terms of death, destruction, expense, and regional destabilization.

Last year Lord Admiral West warned that the US would need no fewer than a million troops to win a war with Iran, almost the number of total active-duty US military personnel in the whole world. Even if this doesn't become WW3, it would still be worse than Vietnam + Iraq.

And now, as I sit as the mother of two teenagers watching what might be a third world war looming on the horizon, all I can think is about how infuriating it is that we've spent the last three years on Russia bullshit and sectarian political infighting instead of building an actual cohesive antiwar movement and pushing real opposition to Trump's warmongering.

Let's get it together, humans. We need big changes, and we need them yesterday.

(Source: caitlinjohnstone.com)

U.S. not prepared for consequences of Gen. Soleimani's assassination: analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) — An author and analyst based in Sweden said even American intelligence experts acknowledge that the US administration is not prepared for the consequences of the assassination of the top Iranian commander Major General Qassem Soleimani.

"Even American intelligence experts and former intelligence officers such as Patrick Lang, Larry C. Johnson, and Scott Ritter... indicate that the US Administration was and is not prepared for the consequences of this assassination," Hussein Askary said in an interview with Tasnim.

Askary is an Iraqi-born Swedish citizen. He is the Southwest Asia Coordinator of the International Schiller Institute. Askary has worked as an economic and strategic analyst on Southwest Asia and North and East Africa for the Washington-based weekly magazine Executive Intelligence Review since 1996. He is the co-author of several books on the New Silk Road strategy and its impact on the world economy. His latest book-length special report "Extending the New Silk Road to West Asia and Africa" was published in November 2017. He has spoken on these matters in international conferences and seminars in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Egypt, Sudan, Iran, Japan, and China. In 2018, he wrote an 80-page study on the reconstruction of Yemen and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The following is the full text of the interview:

■ The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of US President Donald Trump. As you know, the revered commander was an international figure representing the Axis of Resistance. Given the latest regional developments, how do you interpret the assassination?

A: The assassination of General Soleimani and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis is a major blunder and setback for the potential of regaining peace and tranquility in the region after the defeat of Daesh and other



terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. Even American intelligence experts and former intelligence officers such as Patrick Lang, Larry C. Johnson, and Scott Ritter have all described it as such, and indicate that the US Administration was and is not prepared for the consequences of this assassination. There is no strategy for how this new level of aggression can be ended without entering a major regional war, a war which President Trump still insists he has wanted to avoid. Therefore, any rational explanation is difficult to make out of this assassination. It is very likely that Trump was sucked into this reckless operation upon the pushing of neoconservative circles and pro-Zionist warmongering individuals and groups. These forces have been upset with the victories achieved in Syria and Iraq to clean the country from the US and British-backed terrorist groups, and finally pave the way for the integration of the region from Central Asia through Iran, Iraq and to Syria and the Mediterranean.

■ According to many military experts, General Soleimani had a major role in fighting terrorist groups, particularly Daesh (ISIS or ISIL), in Iraq and Syria. How do you think about the top generals' success in combating US-backed terrorism and its effect on his assassination?

A: General Soleimani's personal role and that of the Quds Brigade in stopping and finally defeating Daesh in the region is undeniable even by Western experts. From June 2014, when Daesh took over Mosul, General Soleimani and Iranian forces reacted immediately to this dangerous development to stop Daesh from taking other parts of Iraq including Baghdad. The US-trained Iraqi army suddenly vanished, and the US forces in Iraq were just watching the advancement of Daesh and its allies. Without General Soleimani's intervention along with the Fatwa of Ayatollah Sistani to mobilize the resistance to Daesh, Iraq would have been gone. Similarly in Syria, Iran's support to the Syrian Arab Army, long before the Russian intervention, enabled Damascus to push back and finally defeat the Western-backed terrorist groups. General Soleimani's role in coordinating the Russian intervention into Syria is well known. Therefore, his personal role has definitely played a role in the assassination. However, it is the regional developments that have proven the Western regime-change policies useless, and the emergence of a new paradigm led by Russia, China and their allies such as Iran upsetting the old world order, which could be a direct cause of this latest escalation.

■ In a statement on Friday, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei warned that harsh revenge awaits the criminals behind the martyrdom of General Soleimani. Many believe that if Iran does not take revenge, it will lead to more attacks from the US. In your opinion, how severe would Tehran respond to the "terrorist act" by Washington and how can the response create deterrence against the US and its future moves in the region?

A: This assassination by the Trump Administration has put the region and the world into new uncharted waters. Therefore, it is very difficult to predict the Iranian reaction and "revenge". Military and intelligence experts know very well that Iran has many means of really hurting the US and its allies in the region. Retired American intelligence officer Larry C. Johnson wrote yesterday that "the reaction from Iran is likely to involve Saudi Arabia, Israel and US military, diplomatic and economic targets." But this is a road to bigger disasters. He also argued that Iran has developed a power cyber army that could do real damage to the US infrastructure, which is very much reliant on internet networks. Besides, US troops and interests in Iraq stand completely exposed and open for attacks. It is important to remember that it was Iraqi sovereignty which was breached, and Iraqi military commanders were killed along General Soleimani. The entirety of the US presence and influence in Iraq is in question now.

However, the Iranian leadership has been exerting a great deal of calm and rationality in assessing its reactions to coercive US moves in the recent two years. Of course, a more restrained reaction would be helpful. But that requires guarantees that such criminal operations are stopped and the current US policy towards Iran is reversed. Therefore, the Chairwoman of the International Schiller Institute, Mrs. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, called for Russia and China to intervene diplomatically to make sure that the US realize that that would be the right way of easing the tension and putting the whole region on the path of peace and security.

The USA doubles down on its Saudi allegiance

By Craig Murray

ANTIWAR — For the United States to abandon proxy warfare and directly kill one of Iran’s most senior political figures has changed international politics in a fundamental way. It is a massive error. Its ramifications are profound and complex.

There is also a lesson to be learned here in that this morning there will be excitement and satisfaction in the palaces of Washington, Tel Aviv, Riyadh and Tehran. All of the political elites will see prospects for gain from the new fluidity. While for ordinary people in all those countries there is only the certainty of more conflict, death and economic loss, for the political elite, the arms manufacturers, the military and security services and allied interests, the hedge funds, speculators and oil companies, there are the sweet smells of cash and power.

Tehran will be pleased because the USA has just definitively lost Iraq. Iraq has a Shia majority and so naturally tends to ally with Iran. The only thing preventing that was the Arab nationalism of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath Socialist Party. Bush and Blair were certainly fully informed that by destroying the Ba’ath system they were creating an Iranian/Iraqi nexus, but they decided that was controllable. The “containment” consisted of a deliberate and profound push across the Middle East to oppose Shia influence in proxy wars everywhere.

This is the root cause of the disastrous war in Yemen, where the Zaidi-Shia would have been victorious long ago but for the sustained brutal aerial warfare on civilians carried out by the Western powers through Saudi Arabia. This anti-Shia western policy included the unwavering support for the Sunni Bahraini autocracy in the brutal suppression of its overwhelmingly Shia population. And of course it included the sustained and disastrous attempt to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria and replace it with pro-Saudi Sunni jihadists.

This switch in US foreign policy was known in the White House of 2007 as “the redirection”. It meant that Sunni jihadists like Al-Qaida and later al-Nusra were able to switch back to being valued allies of the United States. It redoubled the slavish tying of US foreign policy to Saudi interests. The axis was completed once Mohammad Bin Salman took control of Saudi Arabia. His predecessors had been coy about their de facto alliance with Israel. MBS felt no shyness about openly promoting Israeli interests, under the cloak of mutual alliance against Iran, calculating quite correctly that Arab street hatred of the Shia outweighed any solidarity with the Palestinians. Common enemies were easy for the USA/Saudi/Israeli alliance to identify; Iran, the Houthi, Assad and of course the Shia Hezbollah, the only military force to have given the Israelis a bloody nose. The Palestinians themselves are predominantly Sunni and their own Hamas was left friendless and isolated.

The principal difficulty of this policy for the USA of course is Iraq. Having imposed a rough democracy on Iraq, the governments were always likely to be Shia dominated and highly susceptible to Iranian influence. The USA had a continuing handle through dwindling occupying forces and through control of the process which produced the government. They also provided financial resources to partially restore the physical infrastructure the US and its allies had themselves destroyed, and of course to fund a near infinite pool of corruption.



That US influence was balanced by strong Iranian aligned militia forces who were an alternative source of strength to the government of Baghdad, and of course by the fact that the center of Sunni tribal strength, the city of Falluja, had itself been obliterated by the United States, three times, in an act of genocide of Iraqi Sunni population.

Through all this the Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi had until now tiptoed with great care. Pro-Iranian yet a long term American client, his government maintained a form of impartiality based on an open hand to accept massive bribes from anybody. That is now over. He is pro-Iranian now.

Such precarious balance as there ever was in Iraq was upset this last two months when the US and Israelis transported more of their ISIL Sunni jihadists into Iraq, to escape the pincer of the Turkish, Russian and Syrian government forces. The Iranians were naturally not going to stand for this and Iranian militias were successfully destroying the ISIL remnants, which is why General Qassem Suleimani was in Iraq, why a US mercenary assisting ISIL was killed in an Iranian militia rocket attack, and why Syrian military representatives were being welcomed at Baghdad airport.

It is five years since I was last in the Green Zone in Baghdad, but it is extraordinarily heavily fortified with military barriers and checks every hundred yards, and there is no way the crowd could have been allowed to attack the US Embassy without active Iraqi government collusion. That profound political movement will have been set in stone by the US assassination of Suleimani. Tehran will now have a grip on Iraq that could prove to be unshakable.

Nevertheless, Tel Aviv and Riyadh will also be celebrating today at the idea that their dream of the USA destroying their regional rival Iran, as Iraq and Libya were destroyed, is coming closer. The USA could do this. The impact of technology on modern warfare should not be underestimated. There is a great deal of wishful thinking that fantasizes about US military defeat, but it is simply unrealistic if the USA actually opted for full scale invasion. Technology is a far greater factor in warfare than it was in the 1960s. The USA could destroy Iran, but the cost

and the ramifications would be enormous, and not only the entire Middle East but much of South Asia would be destabilized, including of course Pakistan. My reading of Trump remains that he is not a crazed Clinton-type war hawk and it will not happen. We all have to pray it does not.

There will also today be rejoicing in Washington. There is nothing like an apparently successful military attack in a US re-election campaign. The Benghazi Embassy disaster left a deep scar upon the psyche of Trump’s support base in particular, and the message that Trump knows how to show the foreigners not to attack America is going down extremely well where it counts, whatever wise people on CNN may say.

So what happens now? Consolidating power in Iraq and finishing the destruction of ISIL in Iraq will be the wise advance that Iranian statesman can practically gain from these events. But that is, of course, not enough to redeem national honor. Something quick and spectacular is required for that. It is hard not to believe there must be a very real chance of action being taken against shipping in the Straits of Hormuz, which Iran can do with little prior preparation. Missile attacks on Saudi Arabia or Israel are also well within Iran’s capability, but it seems more probable that Iran will wish to strike a US target rather than a proxy. An Ambassador may be assassinated. Further missile strikes against US outposts in Iraq are also possible. All of these scenarios could very quickly lead to disastrous escalation.

In the short term, Trump in this situation needs either to pull out troops from Iraq or massively to reinforce them. The UK does not have the latter option, having neither men nor money, and should remove its 1400 troops now. Whether the “triumph” of killing Suleimani gives Trump enough political cover for an early pullout – the wise move – I am unsure. 2020 is going to be a very dangerous year indeed.

Craig Murray is an author, broadcaster, human rights activist, and former diplomat. He was British Ambassador to Uzbekistan from August 2002 to October 2004 and Rector of the University of Dundee from 2007 to 2010. The article is reprinted with permission from his website.

The martyrdom that would lead to a real “Islamic Awakening”

1 → But Trump’s foolish command for attacking Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis, could clear the real face of the U.S. current governors and made the Middle East people rethink about this old question: What the hell the U.S. is doing here in the Middle East? There is a proverb in the middle east that says “ your enemy’s enemy is your friend” so when people see that the U.S. assassinated their enemy’s enemy (Gen. Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis) they could simply realize that the U.S. is a friend of ISIS.

This is the truth that mentioned by other countries like Russia as well. Russian Defense Ministry recently tweeted: Under the direct leadership of Gen. Qassem Soleimani resistance against ISIS AL-Qaede was organized in Syria & Iraq long before “Int’l coalition” led by U.S.

The important point that can be considered now is that can we expect another “Arab Spring” amid this chaos in the Middle East without the U.S. troops?

Author: Ali Rajabi, Head of Iranian Student correspondent association (ISCAnews.ir)

Red Line Crossed: U.S. assassination of Qassem Soleimani

1 → It would be no exaggeration to call the action by Trump foolhardy. U.S. presidential hopeful Joe Biden called the U.S. targeted killing a “hugely escalatory move” and that Trump had “just tossed a stick of dynamite into a tinderbox.”



Behind the scenes, U.S. secretary of state Michael Pompeo appears to be working more for the interests of Tel Aviv than he is for those of Washington. Earlier in March 2019, Pompeo, after equating anti-Semitism with Zionism in a speech, insisted, “any nation that espouses anti-Zionism, like Iran, must be confronted.” Hence, sanctions against Iran and targeted assassinations of its officials are justified in his Likud-dominated mind. Claiming that Iraqis were “thankful that General Soleimani is no more,” the U.S. secretary of state, who also apparently suffers from a cognitive disorder, pontificated that the assassination was justified because Martyr Soleimani “was actively plotting in the region to take actions—a ‘big action’ as he described it—that would have put dozens if not hundreds of American lives at risk.” In other words, the targeted assassination of Martyr Soleimani and the others disrupted an “imminent” attack against Americans in the Middle East. Of course, Pompeo did not provide details of the alleged Iranian “plot.”

Following unrest in Iran due to fuel price hikes in November 2019, IRGC Commander General Hossein Salami warned the U.S. and the Israeli entity of crossing Iran’s red lines. However, it is not clear at all that the Trump regime understands, or for that matter is capable of understanding just what Iran’s red lines are. Former Pentagon adviser Jasmine El Gamal of the Atlantic Council commented that “it is not clear that this administration — or any administration — understands what Iran’s own red lines are.” By martyring General Soleimani, the U.S. crossed one of Iran’s red lines, according to adviser to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani Hesameddin Ashena. Unfortunately by shredding the JCPOA, Trump has cut off any hope of direct communication with President Rouhani, who emphasized, “The great nation of Iran will take revenge for this heinous crime.”

Before crossing the “Red Line,” the Washington regime would have been well-advised to have studied the 2002 U.S. war game, Millennium Challenge, in which the Blue army representing the U.S. was pitted against the Red army, which represented a “rogue” Middle Eastern country. While the adversary of the U.S. was not specified, it was clear that the intention was Iran, since the scenario centered on regime change and opening shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf. Retired U.S. Marine Corps General Paul Van Riper was called back to lead the Red army against the overwhelming resources of the Blue army. By taking the initiative and using unorthodox tactics—much like those known to be developed and used by Iran—Van Riper managed to turn the tide and emerge victorious, by overloading the Blue army’s Aegis radar system and sinking a total of 19 ships. “The whole thing was over in five, maybe ten minutes,” Van Riper explained. But the wargame controllers refused to accept defeat, and by “refloating” the sunken ships and restricting Van Riper’s winning tactics, managed to create an artificial win for the Blue army.

Did the U.S. learn anything from Millennium Challenge? The answer is an unequivocal no. “Nothing was learned from this,” Van Riper said, adding, “A culture not willing to think hard and test itself does not augur well for the future.” And it is a safe bet that the current regime in Washington holds fast to the culture of being unwilling to think hard about the consequences of crossing other nation’s red lines. The attack causing the martyrdom of General Soleimani acutely demonstrates this point.

Having crossed a red line of the Islamic Republic of Iran, some thoughtful reflection by members of the Trump regime at this time might be well advised, before it’s too late and they are forced to face those in the resistance seeking General Soleimani’s blood revenge.

Washington eyes short-term interest with assassination

GLOBALTIMES — The US killed Iranian Major-General Qassem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a commander of Iraq’s Shia Hashd al-Shaabi, or Popular Mobilization Units, in an early-morning drone strike on Friday. The US operation shook the Middle East. Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened “a harsh retaliation” against the US. The US Embassy in Baghdad and the US State Department on Friday called on Americans in Iraq to “immediately leave” Iraq.

This round of escalating conflicts between the US and Iran dates back to December 27, 2019 when a rocket attack hit a US base in northern Iraq, killing an American contractor and wounding four American servicemen. Two days later, the US bombed Kata’ib Hezbollah, an Iraqi Shia armed group, killing 25 members of the militia, and accused Iran of being behind the rocket attack. Then the US Embassy in Iraq was besieged on December 31, which Washington once again believed Iran should be “held fully responsible” for. Soleimani’s removal is the latest escalation of tensions.

More information is needed to understand the situation. The US overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein through war in 2003, but the Iraqi situation didn’t develop



as the US expected. The country’s politics has had more sectarian and tribal features. Shias account for more than 60 percent of Iraq’s population, which provides Tehran with much room for activities in Iraq. For some forces in Iran and Iraq, Soleimani’s trip to Baghdad was a normal exchange and they regarded the US action against him as “assassination” and an “international terrorist act.”

The US previously designated the Quds Force as a foreign terrorist organization. The US and Iran accuse

each other of terrorism and engage in tit-for-tat confrontations. Is this what Washington wants?

The US has bigger power and strength. It easily killed an important Iranian official. But how much hatred will be aroused among Shia Muslims by Soleimani’s death? Will the American personnel in the Middle East become safer?

One certain thing is that the US action will cause much more anger and hostility than fear against the US in Iran and areas that support Iran. Since the war

Airport in the early hours of Friday.

The White House and the Pentagon confirmed the assassination of General Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of Trump.

The Italian analyst further said, “I don’t know what Trump meant to achieve, a subdued Iran, a war with Iran. What I know is that diplomacy between Iran and the US is no longer an option. It was very hard even before, but now it’s impossible as far as I see it”.

He described the assassination as “a reckless decision, the most reckless (one)”, saying it “may come to roost Trump at home”.



Gen. Soleimani’s assassination may come to roost Trump at home: Italian analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A senior fellow with the Transatlantic Program of the Istituto Affari Internazionali described the assassination of Commander of IRGC Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani as “the most reckless decision” taken by Donald Trump, saying it may come to roost the US president at hom.

“The JCPOA is almost surely dead, Iran’s retaliation - which I assume will come - will provoke further US action and the chain reaction to war would be triggered,” Riccardo Alcaro told Tasnim on Saturday.

Major General Soleimani, the deputy head of Iraq’s Hashd al-Shaabi (PMU), and a number of their entourage were killed in a strike by American drones near Baghdad International

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A new map reveals radio waves from tens of thousands of galaxies

Never-before-seen radio waves from tens of thousands of galaxies have a secret to share: The height of star formation in the cosmos may have been more prolific than previously imagined.

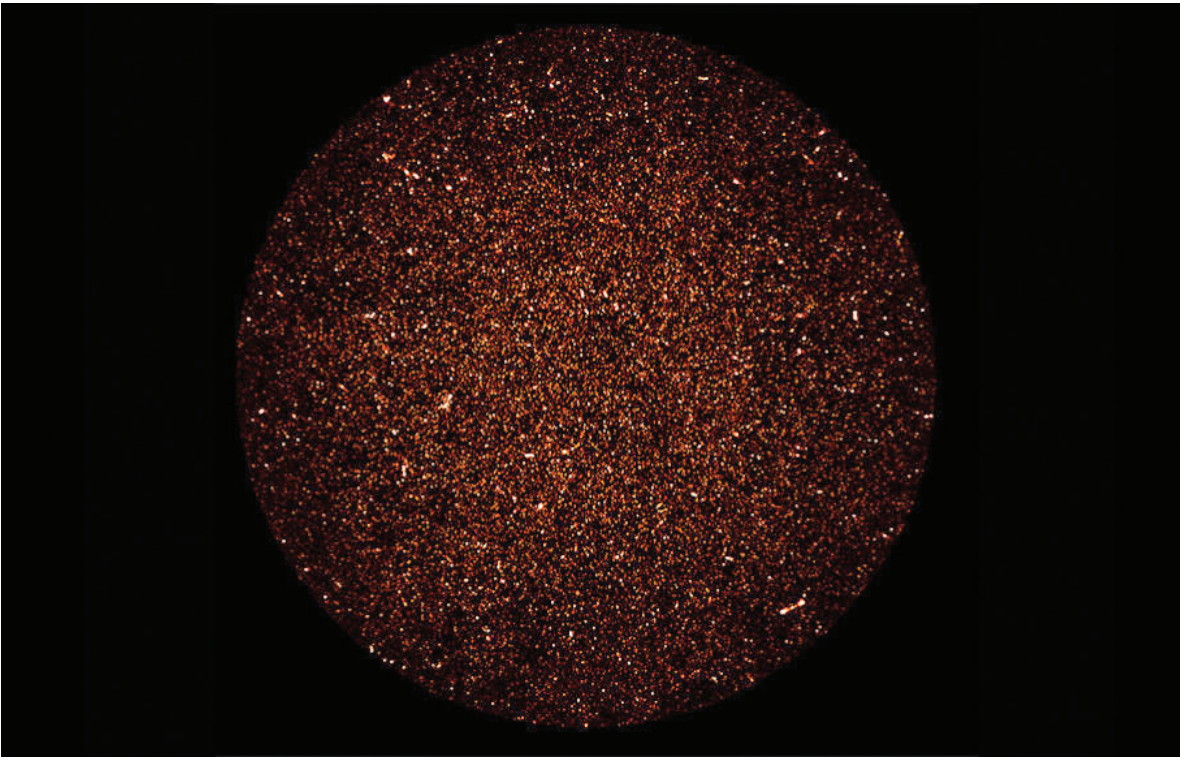
Radio telescopes are good probes of star formation. But until now, they haven't been sensitive enough to see radio waves coming from the vast majority of galaxies that produced stars during the peak of star production, an epoch roughly 10 billion years ago known as cosmic noon.

Now, a new image from the MeerKAT observatory in South Africa has lifted the radio veil on those unsung galaxies. In that image, more than 17,000 pinpoints of radio energy — nearly everyone a star-forming galaxy — fill a patch of sky that, as seen from Earth, could be covered by about five full moons.

Using about 10,000 well-studied nearby galaxies as a template, James Condon and his colleagues calculated how luminous and how far away all those points of light must be. To match the observations, the radio waves must come from star-forming galaxies at cosmic noon churning out stars at about 10 times the rate of modern galaxies, says Condon, an astrophysicist at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Charlottesville, Va.

What's more, he says, there are a little less than twice as many of these sources as expected, suggesting that star formation was much higher around cosmic noon than predicted by calculations based on infrared, optical and ultraviolet data.

(Source: Sciencenews.org)



Mysterious swarms of giant drones keep appearing at night over Colorado



Something strange has been happening in eastern Colorado at night.

Since the week of Christmas, giant drones measuring up to 6 feet (1.8 meters) across have been spotted in the sky at night, sometimes in swarms as large as 30.

The Denver Post first reported these mysterious drone sightings in northeastern Colorado on December 23. Since then, sightings have spanned six counties across Colorado and Nebraska.

Phillips County Sheriff Thomas Elliott had no answer for where the drones came from or whom they belonged to but did have a rough grasp on their flying habits.

"They've been doing a grid search, a grid pattern," he told The Denver Post. "They fly one square and then they fly another square."

The drones, estimated to have 6-foot wingspans, have been flying over Phillips and Yuma counties every night for about the past week, Elliott said Monday. Each night, at least 17 drones appear at about 7 o'clock and disappear at about 10 o'clock, staying 200 to 300 feet in the air.

The Federal Aviation Administration told The Post it had no idea where the

drones came from. Representatives for the Air Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the US Army Forces Command all said the drones did not belong to their organizations.

As the airspace where the drones are flying is relatively ungoverned, there are no regulations requiring the drone operators to identify themselves. Elliott, however, said the drones did not appear to be malicious.

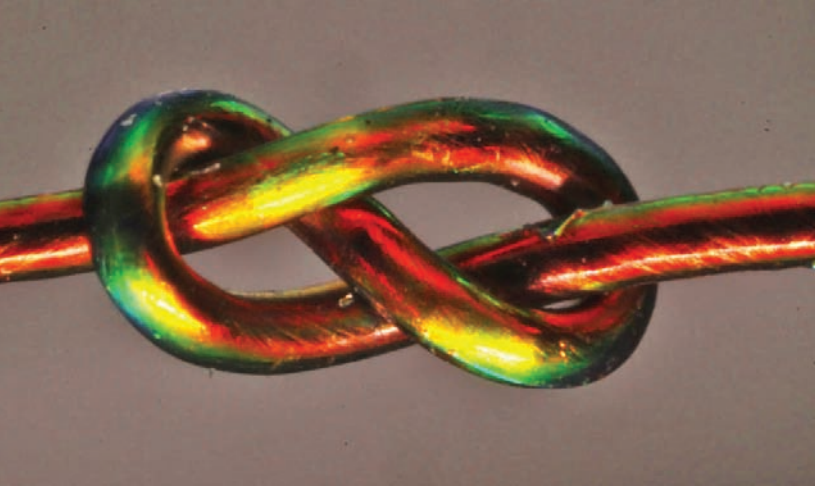
The Post spoke with the commercial photographer and drone pilot Vic Moss, who said the drones appeared to be searching or mapping out the area. Moss said drones often flew at night for crop-examination purposes. The drones might also belong to a local Colorado drone company, which could be testing new technologies.

In the meantime, Moss urges residents not to shoot down the drones, as they are highly flammable.

"It becomes a self-generating fire that burns until it burns itself out," he told The Post. "If you shoot a drone down over your house and it lands on your house, you might not have a house in 45 minutes."

(Source: sciencealert.com)

Color-changing fibers help reveal mysteries of how knots work



Deciding whether a knot is fit to be tied just got a bit more scientific.

Some knots are stronger than others, but scientists have struggled to explain why. Now, with the help of color-changing fibers, researchers have developed simple mathematical rules that can determine the relative strength of various knots based only on the knots' topology — the geometry of how the knot is tied.

"Despite the fact that [knots] have been around for thousands of years, not much is known about why they work the way they do," says applied mathematician Vishal Patil of MIT.

To better understand the simplest knots, Patil and colleagues studied color-changing fibers, with hues that reveal areas of greater and lesser strain in a knotted strand. The strain seen in knots in those fibers agreed with the strain calculated in the researchers' computer simulations — which also estimate the relative strength of different knots — the researchers report in the Jan. 3 Science. The team used that simulation technique to predict the relative strength of more complicated knots known as bends, which

connect two separate pieces of rope.

Patil and colleagues then found that three characteristics could explain a knot's strength. First, the more times the strands cross, the stronger the knot. And the twisting of strands as they cross one another also plays a role: If the strands are twisted in opposite directions, the twist balances out, locking the knot into place. Finally, if adjacent strands slide in opposing directions as a knot is tightened, that also strengthens the knot.

The rules predict only the relative strength of each knot, meaning whether one knot is stronger than another, not its overall strength. For that, the researchers would need to consider details such as the characteristics of the rope or fiber used to tie the knot.

Still, the results explain, for example, why a square knot is stronger than another similar knot called a granny knot, which is notorious for causing loose shoelaces. Unlike a square knot, the granny knot has an unbalanced twist — and that could really trip you up.

(Source: Sciencenews.org)

Astronaut's blocked vein, treated in space, brings medical insight

"Space medicine" took another small step forward after an astronaut who developed a blood clot in a neck vein was diagnosed and treated while onboard the International Space Station, physicians at NASA and elsewhere report.

The research team didn't reveal the astronaut's name, age or gender, but said the ISS crew member developed an asymptomatic thrombosis -- blood clot -- in the jugular vein, the major vein draining blood from the brain back to the heart.

Back on Earth, such a case could be quickly remedied in the nearest emergency room. But the logistics of doing so in space were far more complicated, said the team that included Dr. James Pattarini of Houston's National Aeronautics and Space Administration Johnson Space Center and Dr. Serena Aunon-Chancellor of the Louisiana State University Health Science Center in Baton Rouge.

Reporting the details of the incident in Thursday's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine, they said that in this episode of space medicine, medical decisions occurred "across multiple space agencies to overcome the numerous logistic and operational challenges."

According to the doctors, it was only by sheer luck that the astronaut's blood clot was discovered at all.

The crew member was taking part in a "vascular research study" that involved intermittent ultrasound examinations of blood vessels before, during and after the ISS space mission.

Although the astronaut showed no symptoms of vein blockage -- no headache or facial redness -- the jugular vein was abnormally "prominent" during a physical exam, and a follow-up ultrasound confirmed a clot.

After multiple "telemedicine" discussions with medical staff back on Earth, it was decided that the astronaut would be treated with the blood thinner enoxaparin (Lovenox), 20 vials of which had been part of the space station's medical kit.



The dose was reduced, however, so that the astronaut could be treated until other blood thinners could be dispatched to the space station. Forty-two days after the crew member's clot had been diagnosed, a switch in medications was made, from enoxaparin to apixaban (Eliquis).

The clot slowly shrank over months of treatment, but blood flow through the jugular was still not fully back to normal, even three months after treatment.

However, when the astronaut finally returned to Earth -- and normal gravity -- blood flow in the jugular returned to normal, and treatment was discontinued. In fact, 10 days after landing the clot was gone.

Two experts in circulatory health who read over the report said it gives fascinating new insight into how zero-gravity conditions could compromise blood flow.

The astronaut's clot was a form of deep vein thrombosis, but these clots most often form in the legs, noted Dr. Craig Greben, chief of interventional radiology at Northwell Health in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

It seems that "the weightlessness astronauts experience during space missions may be another unstudied cause of DVT that requires rigorous research, because it can be silent and fatal, and space travel is only increasing," Greben said. Dr. Maja Zaric agreed. She's an interventional cardiologist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City.

Zaric said the astronaut was in real danger from the clot. "The size and proximity of documented blood clot to the heart could have easily put [the crew member] into harm's way, as it could have traveled down to the heart causing pulmonary embolism, or up extending into the head and brain veins," she explained.

And Zaric noted that ultrasounds conducted on other crew members confirmed that zero-gravity conditions can radically change the dynamics of blood flow.

"In six out of 11 studied astronauts, there was abnormal venous flow detected," she said. Instead of the steady forward movement that pushes blood through veins, the astronauts exhibited a "to and fro" or "sloshing" movement, Zaric explained. That does not "ensure effective return of head and brain blood back to the heart," she said.

In essence, gravity appears key to healthy blood flow, and without it a "stasis" appears to occur within vessels, Zaric said.

The research team said the astronaut's survival was a tribute to coordinated medical care. But the case also highlights a new spaceflight danger.

It's now imperative that research continue into "the development of prevention and management strategies for venous thromboembolism in weightlessness, especially with future plans for prolonged space travel to the Moon and Mars," the team wrote.

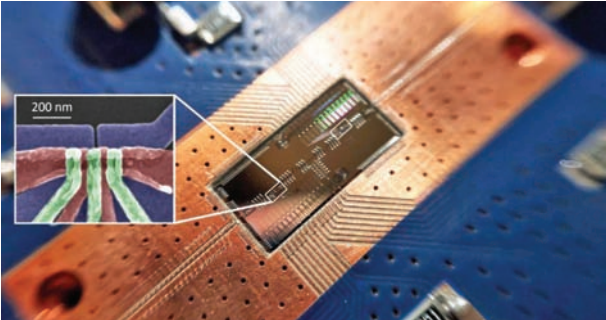
Greben agreed.

(Source: UPI)

In leap for quantum computing, silicon quantum bits establish a long-distance

Imagine a world where people could only talk to their next-door neighbor, and messages must be passed house to house to reach far destinations.

Until now, this has been the situation for the bits of hardware that make up a silicon quantum computer, a type of quantum computer with the potential to be cheaper and more versatile than today's versions.



Now a team based at Princeton University has overcome this limitation and demonstrated that two quantum-computing components, known as silicon "spin" qubits, can interact even when spaced relatively far apart on a computer chip. The study was published in the journal Nature.

"The ability to transmit messages across this distance on a silicon chip unlocks new capabilities for our quantum hardware," said Jason Petta, the Eugene Higgins Professor of Physics at Princeton and leader of the study. "The eventual goal is to have multiple quantum bits arranged in a two-dimensional grid that can perform even more complex calculations. The study should help in the long term to improve communication of qubits on a chip as well as from one chip to another."

Quantum computers have the potential to tackle challenges beyond the capabilities of everyday computers, such as factoring large numbers. A quantum bit, or qubit, can process far more information than an everyday computer bit because, whereas each classical computer bit can have a value of 0 or 1, a quantum bit can represent a range of values between 0 and 1 simultaneously.

To realize quantum computing's promise, these futuristic computers will require tens of thousands of qubits that can communicate with each other. Today's prototype quantum computers from Google, IBM and other companies contain tens of qubits made from a technology involving superconducting circuits, but many technologists view silicon-based qubits as more promising in the long run.

Silicon spin qubits have several advantages over superconducting qubits. The silicon spin qubits retain their quantum state longer than competing qubit technologies. The widespread use of silicon for everyday computers means that silicon-based qubits could be manufactured at low cost.

The challenge stems in part from the fact that silicon spin qubits are made from single electrons and are extremely small.

"The wiring or 'interconnects' between multiple qubits is the biggest challenge towards a large scale quantum computer," said James Clarke, director of quantum hardware at Intel, whose team is building silicon qubits using Intel's advanced manufacturing line, and who was not involved in the study. "Jason Petta's team has done great work toward proving that spin qubits can be coupled at long distances."

To accomplish this, the Princeton team connected the qubits via a "wire" that carries light in a manner analogous to the fiber optic wires that deliver internet signals to homes. In this case, however, the wire is actually a narrow cavity containing a single particle of light, or photon, that picks up the message from one qubit and transmits it to the next qubit.

The two qubits were located about half a centimeter, or about the length of a grain of rice, apart. To put that in perspective, if each qubit were the size of a house, the qubit would be able to send a message to another qubit located 750 miles away.

The key step forward was finding a way to get the qubits and the photon to speak the same language by tuning all three to vibrate at the same frequency. The team succeeded in tuning both qubits independently of each other while still coupling them to the photon. Previously the device's architecture permitted coupling of only one qubit to the photon at a time.

"You have to balance the qubit energies on both sides of the chip with the photon energy to make all three elements talk to each other," said Felix Borjans, a graduate student and first author on the study. "This was the really challenging part of the work."

Each qubit is composed of a single electron trapped in a tiny chamber called a double quantum dot. Electrons possess a property known as spin, which can point up or down in a manner analogous to a compass needle that points north or south. By zapping the electron with a microwave field, the researchers can flip the spin up or down to assign the qubit a quantum state of 1 or 0.

"This is the first demonstration of entangling electron spins in silicon separated by distances much larger than the devices housing those spins," said Thaddeus Ladd, senior scientist at HRL Laboratories and a collaborator on the project. "Not too long ago, there was doubt as to whether this was possible, due to the conflicting requirements of coupling spins to microwaves and avoiding the effects of noisy charges moving in silicon-based devices. This is an important proof-of-possibility for silicon qubits because it adds substantial flexibility in how to wire those qubits and how to lay them out geometrically in future silicon-based 'quantum microchips.'"

The communication between two distant silicon-based qubits builds on previous work by the Petta research team. In a 2010 paper in the journal Science, the team showed it is possible to trap single electrons in quantum wells. In the journal Nature in 2012, the team reported the transfer of quantum information from electron spins in nanowires to microwave-frequency photons, and in 2016 in Science they demonstrated the ability to transmit information from a silicon-based charge qubit to a photon. They demonstrated nearest-neighbor trading of information in qubits in 2017 in Science. And the team showed in 2018 in Nature that a silicon spin qubit could exchange information with a photon.

Jelena Vuckovic, professor of electrical engineering and the Jensen Huang Professor in Global Leadership at Stanford University, who was not involved in the study, commented: "Demonstration of long-range interactions between qubits is crucial for further development of quantum technologies such as modular quantum computers and quantum networks. This exciting result from Jason Petta's team is an important milestone towards this goal, as it demonstrates non-local interaction between two electron spins separated by more than 4 millimeters, mediated by a microwave photon. Moreover, to build this quantum circuit, the team employed silicon and germanium -- materials heavily used in the semiconductor industry."

(Source: Science Daily)

Cultural heritage celebration called off over respect for martyr Soleimani

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Iran’s tourism ministry has canceled a ceremony to celebrate the registration of dotar, a traditional stringed instrument, on the UNESCO Cultural Heritage list over the martyrdom of Major General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

Deputy tourism minister Mohammad-Hassan Talebian announced the cancelation on Friday after the government announced three days of mourning over the martyrdom of Soleimani which happened in a U.S. airstrike at Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning.



“Celebration for the UNESCO recognition of traditional skills of crafting and playing the dotar, which was scheduled for tomorrow (January 4) at the Niavaran palace, is canceled following the martyrdom of Sardar Haj Qassem Soleimani and the announcement of three days of public mourning in the country,” Talebian said on Friday.

“The ceremony is postponed to another time, which will be announced later.”

Iran’s traditional skills of crafting and playing the dotar won world heritage status in December 2019, joining UNESCO’s culture list as one of the most prominent social and cultural components of the folkloric music of the nation. Dotar (meaning “two strings” in Persian) is a folkloric plucked musical instrument with a pear-shaped bow crafted with dried wood or mulberry tree, a neck made of apricot or walnut wood, and two strings.

Man who sent missing in Grand Canyon National Park sound safe

A Texas man was found alive in Grand Canyon National Park on Thursday, nearly two weeks after he went missing there.

The man, identified by the National Park Service as 58-year-old Martin Edward O’Connor, had gone missing on Dec. 22 after being last spotted by the South Rim of the canyon, believed to be traveling alone. He was found by park rangers in the inner canyon and evacuated by helicopter, according to the NPS.

O’Connor, from La Porte, Texas, had initially been spotted by hikers on Wednesday along the New Hance Trail before rangers were finally able to find him. He was undergoing a medical evaluation after his rescue and was waiting for family members to join him, NPS spokeswoman Lily Daniels told CNN.

While it was not immediately clear what O’Connor had been doing for the nearly two weeks he had been missing, CNN reported the trail he was found on leads down to the Colorado River and should be only attempted by experienced hikers.

Many hikers who get lost make common mistakes like wandering off to try and find help or not packing bright enough clothing to help rescuers spot you.

To prepare for a challenging hike in Grand Canyon National Park (or any challenging hike, for that matter), the NPS recommends staying on designated trails and keeping a safe distance of at least six feet from the edge of the rim.

In addition, NPS suggests hikers keep an eye on everyone in their group, especially children, and watch their foot placement to prevent any accidents.

(Source: MSN)

ROUND THE GLOBE

Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests

Spread out along around 200km of the coast province of Kenya are ten separate forested sites, mostly on low hills, ranging in size from 30 to around 300 ha, in which are the remains of fortified villages, Kayas, of the Mijikenda people. They represent more than thirty surviving Kayas.



The Kayas began to fall out of use in the early 20th century and are now revered as the repositories of spiritual beliefs of the Mijikenda people and are seen as the sacred abode of their ancestors.

The forest around the Kayas have been nurtured by the Mijikenda community to protect the sacred graves and groves and are now almost the only remains of the once extensive coastal lowland forest.

The site is inscribed as bearing unique testimony to a cultural tradition and for its direct link to a living tradition.

(Source: UNESCO)

Tehran’s historical towers turn off lights to commemorate martyr Soleimani

TOURISM **TEHRAN** — Tehran’s two iconic historical towers turned off lights on Saturday and will remain dark on Sunday as a sign of paying tribute to Major General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), who was martyred on Friday.

[Exterior] lighting for Tehran province’s historical towers of Tughrul and Shebeli won’t be done on Saturday and Sunday in honor of martyr Soleimani, CHTN quoted provincial tourism chief Parham Janfeshan as saying on Saturday.

Standing tall in the city of Rey, the 12th-century Tughrul Tower is in fact the tomb of Seljuk ruler Tughrul Beg, who died in Rey in 1063. Originally, like other monuments of its time, it was capped by a conical dome which would have added to its height.

Shebeli Tower, which dominates the Damavand’s countryside skyline, is a roofed octagon tomb of Sheikh Shebeli, a Sufi mystic. The structure is a remnant of the Samanid era, making it from the 12th century, at the latest, and is similar in design to extant structures in Bukhara.

General Soleimani was martyred in a U.S. airstrike at Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning.



Kermanshah exports of handicrafts surge 40 percent, hit \$15 million

HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — Handicrafts exports from western Kermanshah province reached some \$15 million in the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (started March 21, 2019), showing 40 percent growth year on year.

“About 60 fields of handicraft are practiced by nearly 13,000 artisans [and crafters] across the Kermanshah province,” provincial tourism director Omid Qaderi said on Wednesday, ISNA reported.

Talking about developing plans to promote handicraft exports, Qaderi said that expansion of training [workshops], branding, commercializing, and establishing handicraft markets are among programs to support the province’s handicrafts.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the official announced that 568,000 people visited museums and historical sites in Kermanshah.

Foreign visits to the museums and historical sites shows a 27 percent increase year on year, because “last year, we



began planning to promote tourism across the province’s historical sites.”

Handicraft exports from Iran reached \$146 million since the beginning of the current Iranian calendar year, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian announced last week,

3,000-year-old silk spinning still practiced in Iran



HERITAGE **TEHRAN** — There are silk makers in different parts of Iran, mainly in northern Gilan and northeastern Khorasan Razavi provinces, that still practice the trade their ancestors did some 3,000 years ago.

For more than three millennia, silk thread produced in Iran has been used to make clothing fabric and for weaving Persian rugs.

In many of these small villages along the Iran-Afghanistan border, families receive the cocoons of live silkworms in wooden boxes from wealthy silk traders who also pay their

salaries. The cocoons are then soaked in hot water, which loosens the filaments so that the raw silk threads may be extracted, the Middle East Eye said in an article on Thursday.

The Silk Road was a well-connected network of routes which, according to ancient maps, began in China and passed through central Asia before ending in Syria. It served as an important trade route connecting the Mediterranean Sea and China.

Here is excerpts of the article:

It was from his father that 47-year-old Gholamreza Mohammadi learnt how to unravel silk filaments from silk cocoons. Every day, Mohammadi spends between four and five hours reeling silk in the dark and damp workshop at the end of his courtyard.

Like Mohammadi, all 110 families in the small village of Bask, around 1,000 kilometres northeast of the capital Tehran, make a living producing silk thread.

Silk cocoons are produced in the northern provinces of Iran. They are also imported from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for around 2m Iranian rials (roughly \$17) per kilo. But villagers like Naghizadeh do not have the financial means to buy or import the cocoons themselves, so they rely on silk traders for the supply.

In the past, silk threads would be wound round the spindles by hand. Today, this process is powered by electric machinery, but most of the rest of the process is still done manually. While there are industrial silk factories in Iran, at smaller workshops like Mohammadi’s, little has changed in the traditional craft for hundreds of years.

“It’s a difficult job,” says 50-year-old Asghar Naghizaded, who has been producing silk threads since he was 13, when he was still in high school. It is a profession these villagers have dedicated their whole lives to. “But the main benefit of that goes in the pockets of the masters [silk traders]; we are just the labourers,” Naghizaded says.

And it is indeed a long-winded process. According to another silk producer in Bask, Hojjat Amini, an entire family of four people or more might work for 12 hours straight to produce one kilogram of silk thread.

Each member of the family plays a role in the process.



Nine-year-old Shir-mohammad helps his mother with the final stage of the silk thread production, where several threads are gathered together to form bundles.

The process involves minimal waste - even the silkworms are dried and used as fish food. The traders allow the villagers to dry and sell the silkworms as they please.

These bundles of finished silk thread, held in Mohammadi’s wife’s hands, are the product of around a week’s work. Every month, the silk traders come to the village and collect the silk threads which are now ready to be steam dyed.

What luxury travel looks like in 2020

As the year — and decade — turns, travel journalists are bombarded with client-serving PR pitches about the newest/hottest/splashiest trends. But given that change is an evolution without a clear starting date, it’s wise to employ 2020 hindsight before looking forward to how travel will unfold in 2020.

Conveniently, the recently released 18th annual Bain & Company Luxury Study, produced in conjunction with Altagamma, provides some guidance.

According to the study, the overall luxury market, encompassing both luxury goods and experiences, grew by four percent at constant exchange rates to an estimated 1.3 trillion euros globally in 2019. The growth is coming largely from Asia and from younger generations, according to the study, which was authored by Bain partners Federica Levato and Claudia D’Arpizio.

The report says that while millennials accounted for 35 percent of the luxury market in 2019, by 2025, that will rise to 45 percent.

It’s members of Generation Z, however, who are poised to reshape the industry. By 2035, Gen Zers could comprise up to 40 percent of luxury buyers.

“Gen Z customers are the new frontiers of tomorrow’s luxury market — and they already represent a growing portion of luxury consumption in Asia,” said D’Arpizio. They are already showing specific consumption habits differentiating them from millennials. Therefore, going into the new decade, “luxury brands will need to connect with customers in an increasingly personal way,” said D’Arpizio. “The products, experiences, and ideas that they deliver will need to flow together to appeal to the emotions of younger customers, who are diverse, global, and opinionated, and also more pragmatic than millennials.”

She predicted experiential travel will progressively evolve into “achievement travel” for Gen Z, with an emphasis on travel experiences that allow them to align with community. Those experiences will need to be

designed to be more sensitive to ethical and environmental standards, as Generation Z “will be more committed to social responsibility than prior generations.” Moreover, the relevance of social responsibility is aligning among nationalities, with Asia catching up with the West.

■ **The travel landscape transforms**

Global consultancy Euromonitor suggested that experiential luxury is set to outpace all other categories of luxury spending: “Luxury is becoming more than just a price point but a state of mind that luxury brands embody as consumers continue to seek truly authentic and transformational experiences.”

Transformational travel seems to be the term on everyone’s tongue as we enter the New Year. It’s defined by the Transformational Travel Council as “intentionally traveling to stretch, learn, and grow into new ways of being and engaging with the world.”

Currently, transformational travel is mainly linked to the wellness arena. And,

in fact, a new survey of Virtuoso travel advisors specializing in wellness named meditation and mindfulness as the top travel activity their clients are seeking. That’s because clients “are looking to wellness trips to restore balance and transform mind, spirit, and body. They are seeking skills to help maintain that calm and support their mental, spiritual, and physical health once they return home.”

But in 2020, transformation is likely to break free of its wellness yoke. According to Philippe Brown, founder of luxury travel advisory Brown + Hudson, a 2020 vision of transformation includes insight, memorability, knowledge, purpose, and timeliness, all of which can permeate all levels and types of travel. “As travelers harness nature, culture, and social activities to connect with their inner self and to promote qualitative life changes,” said Brown, “travel won’t be so much about the where, but the why.”

(Source: Skift)

The Donald is now America first’s own assassin

By David Stockman

ANTIWAR — By the twisted logic of Imperial Washington you could say the Iranians were asking for it. After all, they had the nerve to locate their country right in the middle of 35 U.S. military bases!

Then again, your saner angels may ask: What in the hell is Washington doing with a massive military footprint in a region and in a string of backwater countries that have virtually no bearing on homeland security, safety and liberty?

Djibouti? Oman? Kyrgyzstan? Uzbekistan? Afghanistan? Bahrain? Kuwait? And, yes, Iraq and Iran?

In fact, Washington destroyed the former for no good reason and based on egregious Big Lies about Saddam’s nonexistent WMDs and sheltering of al-Qaeda. That turned Iraq into a failed state hellhole pulsating with sectarian frictions and anti-American grievances — even as the rump state of Iraq centered in Baghdad fell under the control of Iran-friendly Shiite politicians and militias.

At the same time, Iran itself is zero threat to the American homeland. It’s tiny \$350 billion GDP amounts to 6 days of US annual output and its \$20 billion defense budget is equivalent to what the Pentagon wastes every 8 days.

Militarily, it has no blue water navy, an air force that could double as a cold war museum and a short and medium range missile force that is self-evidently dedicated to defense and deterrence in the region, not an attack on the USA way over on the yonder side of the deep blue seas.

Its 300 or so active aircraft, for example, include 175 US F-4, F-5, F-14 and sundry transports, helicopters and trainers purchased by the Shah during the 1970s and kept together since the revolution with bailing wire and bubble gum. It also fields 60 or so Soviet vintage MiG-29s and Sukhoi Su attack aircraft — plus a few dozen European and Chinese planes of mostly ancient design.

Likewise, even its most advanced medium range cruise missile (Soumar) can barely get to Rome, Italy, to say nothing of Rome, Georgia.

As is evident from the yellow, green, red and black circles on the map below, which circles outline each missile’s striking range, the overwhelming bulk of Iran’s missile force has a range of 500 miles or less. These missiles are capable of hitting targets in the immediate vicinity of the Persian Gulf, or roughly the same area which encompasses the 35 military bases designated by American flags in the graphic above.

Stated differently, Iran’s extremely modest military capacities are not remotely about an offensive threat to the American homeland. They are overwhelmingly about defending itself in its own neighborhood, where Washington has been intervening and occupying with massive firepower and hostile intent for decades.

Therein, of course, lies a hint. More than 13 years after Saddam’s last hurrah on a Baghdad gallows, the US still has upwards of 30,000 troops and contractors in the immediate vicinity of the Persian Gulf. But why?

It can’t be owing to ISIS. The Islamic State was never much more than a no count salient of dusty, woebegone towns and villages on the Upper Euphrates straddling Western Iraq and northeastern Syria that was destined to collapse on its own barbaric madness anyway; and which was essentially dispatched by the Russian air force, Assad’s military and the Shiite militia forces organized by the dead man himself, Major General Soleimani.

Likewise, it should be obvious by now that it’s not the oil, either. At the moment the US is producing nearly 13 million barrels per day and is the world’s leading oil producer — well ahead of Saudi Arabia and Russia; and is now actually a net exporter of crude for the first time in three-quarters of a century.

Besides, the Fifth Fleet has never been the solution to oil security. The cure for high prices is high prices — as the great US shale oil and Canadian heavy oil booms so cogently demonstrate, among others.

And the route to global oil industry stability is peaceful commerce because virtually every regime — regardless of politics and ideology — needs all the oil revenue it can muster to fund its own rule and keep its population reasonably pacified.

Surely, there is no better case for the latter than that of Iran itself — with an economy burdened by decades of war, sanctions and mis-rule and an 80-million population that aspires to a western standard of living.

So left to its own devices, Tehran would produce 5 million barrels per day from its abundant reserves. That’s barely one-tenth of its present meager output, which is owing to Washington’s vicious sanctions against any and all customers for its oil and potential investors in modernizing and expanding its production capacity.

So if it’s not ISIS or oil, exactly why does Washington maintain the circle of 35 bases displayed in the graphic above and keep thousands of US troops and other personnel in harms’ way in the region?

Or more to the moment, why has the Donald been unable to bring the forces home as he has so often proclaimed to be his policy?

The answer, of course, is that the foreign policy apparatus of the US government is controlled by anti-Iran neocons and regime changers. We are still in Syria not to fight ISIS, which is gone, but to block Iran’s land route to its allies in Syria and Lebanon (Hezbollah); and we remain in Iraq solely



to use it as a base for clandestine US and Israeli attacks on these allies and proxy forces.

These Washington instigated or conducted attacks on Iranian allies, in fact, are why there was growing pressure in the Iraqi government to demand that the US finally leave. These pressures will now become overwhelming in light of this week’s US bombing of five PMF camps (Popular Mobilization Forces) which are Shiite militias that have been integrated into the Iraqi army and which are under the command of its prime minister, and last night’s assassination of their Deputy Commander along with Soleimani.

To be sure, Iran’s choice of allies has nothing to do with America’s homeland security: None of the sovereign governments of Lebanon (where Hezbollah is the leading political party) or Syria or even Iraq (which is an ostensible US ally) have protested these confession (i.e. Shiite) based arrangements and the aid and benefits which flow from them.

That’s because the so-called Shiite crescent is a bogeyman invented by Bibi Netanyahu and is the excuse for his hysterical anti-Iranian foreign policy. The latter is not even designed to enhance Israel’s own security, but to vilify a “far enemy” that can keep his rightwing coalition glued together and himself in power.

Likewise, the US military-industrial complex’s greed and appetite for power and pelf is so voracious that it will embrace any and all missions anywhere on the planet — no matter how stupid or futile or immoral, as per the case of 19-years in Afghanistan — that keep the budgetary loot flowing.

Accordingly, the Washington apparatus conspires to keep the 35 Mideast bases in place and to trigger actions like last night’s insane assassination of Iran’s foremost military leader in order to reify the threat and to periodically stoke tensions and counterattacks that keep missions alive and the forces deployed.

Indeed, we are hard-pressed to imagine a more poignant case of the pot calling the kettle black than Washington’s claim that it had to retaliate owing to actual and expected Iranian “aggression”.

For crying out loud, Washington has been demonizing, ostracizing and economically attacking Iran for decades, and is now literally attempting to destroy its economy and society through is oil sanctions and its “maximum pressure” campaign that aims to bring the fate of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi to its top leaders in Tehran.

So do ya think a regime under a veritable existential threat might gravitate toward retaliation as an alternative to extinction?

And we needs be clear about the matter of striking back in self defense. Washington’s current sanctions campaign against Iran is so aggressive and brutal that it constitutes war by any other name.

When you surround a sovereign nation with an armada of land, sea and air-based high-tech lethality and than declare outright economic war on it with a barely-disguised aim of regime change, it must and will fight back however it can.

That’s why Secretary of State Pompeo’s statement justifying the Donald’s act of naked aggression

is so hideous.

Washington is putting the entire nation of Iran at risk in the very place where God or evolution, as the case may be, formed the peninsula on which it resides; and it is doing so without any Iranian provocation against the security of the American homeland whatsoever.

But this neocon knucklehead has the gall to insist that when it comes to the actual anti-Iranian belligerents (i.e. U.S. forces) Washington has bivouacked where they have no business being at all, that not a hair on their head should come to harm.

That’s Imperial arrogance of a kind rarely seen in a world history which is littered with exactly that.

“I can’t talk too much about the nature of the threats. But the American people should know that the President’s decision to remove Soleimani from the battlefield saved American lives,” Pompeo told CNN.

The IRGC general had been “actively plotting” in the region to “take big action, as he described it, that would have put hundreds of lives at risk,” according to Pompeo.

Undoubtedly, things will now spiral out of control because the Iranian regime must and will retaliate for Soleimani’s death. Indeed, by vaporizing the latter, the Donald has now also vaporized any chance of actually implementing the “America First” policy upon which he ran, and which was the principal basis for his freakish elevation to the Oval Office.

The fact is, the only decent thing Obama did on the foreign policy front was the Iran Nuke Deal. Under the latter, Iran gave up a nuclear weapons capability it never had or wanted for the return of billions of escrowed dollars (which belong to Tehran in the first place), while putting itself in a straight-jacket of international inspections and controls that even Houdini could not have broken free from.

But the Donald wantonly shit-canned this arrangement, not because Iran violated either the letter or spirit of the deal, but because the neocons — led by his bubble-headed son-in-law and Bibi Netanyahu errand boy, Jared Kushner — blatantly lied to him about its alleged defects.

Indeed, the resulting Washington pivot to the current “maximum pressure” aggression against Iran is fast becoming the Empire most demented and shameful hour — even as it crystalizes like rarely before the difference between homeland defense and imperial aggression.

Under the former, not one American serviceman, contractor or civilian official would be in harms’ way because the ring of hostile bases surrounding Iran would not exist nor would Washington be waging economic warfare on what would otherwise be a prosperous 5 million barrel per day oil trade with the world.

Only empires put their citizens needlessly in harms’ way and thereby trap their leader’s into a cycle of violence which feeds upon itself.

The Donald is now yet another American president ensnared in the kind of tit-for-tat trap that is the modus operandi of Empire First.

Donald Trump’s assassination of Qassem Suleimani will come back to haunt him

By Mohammad Ali Shabani

THEGUARDIAN — The US has assassinated Qassem Suleimani, the famed leader of Iran’s Quds force, alongside a senior commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilisation Units, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. To grasp what may come next, it is vital to understand not only who these men were but also the system that produced them.

Nicknamed the “shadow commander” in the popular press, Suleimani spent his formative years on the battlefields of the Iran-Iraq war during the 1980s, when Saddam Hussein — who at the time enjoyed the support of western and Arab powers — was attempting to destroy the emerging Islamic Republic.

But few people remember that his first major mission as commander of the Quds force — the extraterritorial branch of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards — involved implicit coordination with the United States as the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001. The Taliban were, and to some extent remain, a mutual enemy. That alliance of convenience ended in 2002 when the US president George W Bush notoriously branded Iran a member of the “axis of evil”.



In the years after, Suleimani laboured to bleed the US military in places like Iraq. He succeeded. After having spent trillions of dollars and lost thousands of troops, Washington withdrew from Iraq in 2011 — partly as a result of Iranian pressure on the Iraqi government.

Suleimani had little time to celebrate, however. His attention was turned to containing fallout from the Arab spring, propping up the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. That development saw the creation of a region-wide network of Iranian-backed militias numbering more than 100,000 men, unprecedented Iranian military collaboration with Russia, and the transformation of Hezbollah into a force capable of operating on significant scale outside Lebanon’s borders. By 2014, when he successfully halted Islamic State’s attempt to overrun Iraq, Suleimani was being feted as a hero among Iraqis alongside the local commanders, including al-Muhandis. The same response was evident in Iran, where he quickly became a household name and was rumoured to be a potential future president — a trend that was strengthened by the Trump administration’s unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018.

So the US has not merely killed an Iranian military commander but also a highly popular figure, viewed as a guardian of Iran even among secular-minded Iranians. And with the assassination of al-Muhandis, the Trump administration has put itself in the position of having killed the operational commander of a large branch of the Iraqi armed forces.

Some will characterise the deaths as a huge blow to Iran’s proxy capabilities and wider policy in the region. But such an approach ignores how the Iranian system is structured.

Suleimani’s successor as Quds force leader — his long-time deputy, Esmail Qaani — was announced within 12 hours of his death. And while Suleimani was charismatic and played a personal role in cultivating many of Iran’s relationships in the region, those ties do not rely on him alone. Rather, they are the product of extensive and deep bonds that often go back decades and in many instances involve family ties.

Suleimani was well aware of the dangers of the job, as was his singular boss, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in years past deemed him a “living martyr”. So succession planning was never far from his mind. Indeed, 62-year-old Suleimani gave his younger lieutenants considerable operational authority. In practice, this has meant the elevation of a new generation of Quds force operatives, some of whom Suleimani had already begun positioning in vital posts: a case in point is Iraj Masjedi, the current Iranian ambassador to Iraq.

So what comes next? Predictably, the Iranian authorities have promised “severe retaliation”. How that unfolds in practice is anyone’s guess. There is certainly no shortage of US targets in the region. But Suleimani may, with his death, have already achieved the greatest revenge of all, and without firing a single bullet: namely, his ultimate objective of ending the US military presence in Iraq.

If he was indeed behind the attack on the US military base that ultimately precipitated his own assassination, then he has probably succeeded in trapping the US into initiating its own ejection from Iraq. So far, most Iraqi decision-makers, from the caretaker prime minister to the country’s highest spiritual authority, have condemned in no uncertain terms the violation of sovereignty that the assassination entailed.

As for Trump, he is stuck with the same problem he faced before Friday’s strike.

The United States is no closer to the much-touted “new deal” with Iran, which the president boasted would eclipse that negotiated by his predecessor. Whatever remaining diplomatic off-ramps there were are rapidly crumbling.

Meanwhile, at a time when his unprecedented sanctions had stirred unrest inside Iran, the political elite has just been handed a rallying cry. The strike on Suleimani, whose status approached that of national icon, will harden popular sentiment against the US while simultaneously shoring up the regime.

For all his crowing about the decisive blow dealt to an insolent enemy, Trump may be about to discover that the problem with martyrs is that they live forever.

• Mohammad Ali Shabani is a researcher at Soas University of London, where he focuses on Iranian foreign policy

Australia wildfires: Half a billion animals and plants killed as glaciers turn black

The wildfire crisis ravaging Australia has wreaked environmental havoc since it began in September, wiping out almost half a billion animals and plants as well as turning glaciers in New Zealand black.

Ecologists at the University of Sydney estimate around 480 million creatures have been killed in the wildfires, including 8,000 koalas.

Officials fear that 30 per cent of the koala colony in New South Wales had been destroyed as 10 million acres of land burnt to the ground in the state.



Nature Conservation Council ecologist Mark Graham told parliament: “[Koalas] really have no capacity to move fast enough to get away [from the flames].”

“The fires have burnt so hot and so fast that there has been significant mortality of animals in the trees, but there is such a big area now that is still on fire and still burning that we will probably never find the bodies.”

Rescuers at Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Services (Wires) told Reuters they were concerned about not receiving as many animal patients as they expected in the crisis.

Tracy Burgess, a volunteer, said: “We’re not getting that many animals coming into our care. So our concern is that they don’t come into care because they’re not there any more, basically.”

Across the Tasman Sea, smoke from the wildfires are posing a new threat to New Zealand’s white glaciers, turning them black and staining snow brown.

Social media posts from tourists and helicopter services from the Franz Josef and Tasman glaciers show “caramelised” snow and smoke-shrouded views.

A climber who posted a video from the top of the Tasman glacier added: “We can actually smell the burning here in Christchurch. Thinking of you guys.”

The whiteness of snow and ice reflects the sun’s heat and slows melting, but as ash and dust settle on the snow, it absorbs more heat and melts at a faster rate.

Over 3,000 glaciers in New Zealand are quickly disappearing due to global warming and many could completely melt away by the end of the century.

Andrew Mackintosh, a glacier and climate expert, told The Australian: “If it stays on the surface then it will certainly enhance melt. If fire frequency, ash and dust transport increase, there is a chance that this will hasten the demise of New Zealand’s glaciers.”

The total death toll rose to 17 on New Year’s Day and over five million hectares (12 million acres) of land has been torched across the nation since the blazes began in September.

New South Wales minister for transport, Andrew Constance, became emotional and broke down on live television as he recounted the impact of the fires.

“It’s unfair. I met four Rural Fire Service guys yesterday who lost their homes,” he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s News Breakfast programme on Wednesday. “Beautiful neighbours of mine lost their homes. It is tough.”

(Source: The Independent)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

Smoking ban in Greece

(October 02, 2002)

In Greece a new ban on smoking in public spaces was introduced on Tuesday 1st October. It is the first in a series of measures aimed at curbing the habit among Greeks, who are the heaviest smokers in the European Union. This report from Panos Polyzoidis: Daily life in Greece will be a lot different as of Tuesday, the day on which new, stricter anti-smoking regulations come into effect. There will be a **partial ban** on smoking in all public spaces: stations, hospitals, public services, schools and colleges, where **special areas will be designated** for those who **light up**.

The health ministry’s campaign is aimed at protecting the rights of non-smokers. But ministry officials also hope their **measures** will help reduce smoking in this tobacco-producing country, where around forty-five percent of all people **indulge in the habit**, and where smoking is **part of popular culture**.

As of December first, all cafes, bars and restaurants will **be obliged to** provide non-smoking areas with the exception of traditional cafes and late-night clubs. And at the beginning of next year, the ban on tobacco advertising will be extended to cover outdoor **billboards** and cinemas.

When the new measures were announced last spring, Prime Minister Costas Simitis was the first to **enforce** them, banning smoking during cabinet meetings. But the announcement was **met with mixed reaction**; some Greeks appear to accept the need to regulate smoking, but others thought the new rules would not be enforceable.

■ **Words**
a partial ban: a ban is an official statement that forbids something. If a ban is partial, it is not a total ban
special areas will be designated: there will be special places
light up: start smoking
measures: actions that are carried out by people in authority in order to achieve a particular result
indulge in the habit: here, smoke. If you indulge in something, you allow yourself to do it
part of popular culture: very common
be obliged to: have to
billboards: high fences or boards on which large posters are displayed
enforce: if you enforce a rule, you make sure that it is obeyed
met with mixed reaction: if something is met with mixed reaction, some people think it is a good idea while others think it is not
(Source: BBC)

Ban on Caspian sturgeon fishing extended by end of 2020

ENVIRONMENT

TEHRAN — Caspian Sea littoral states have extended the ban on sturgeon fishing in the Caspian Sea until the end of 2020, IRNA news agency reported on Wednesday.

The Persian sturgeon (*Acipenser persicus*) is a species of fish in the family Acipenseridae. It is found in the Caspian Sea and to a lesser extent the Black Sea and ascends certain rivers to spawn, mainly the Volga, Kura, Araks and Ural Rivers.

The threats faced by this fish include excessive fishing with the removal of immature fish before they have bred, damming of the rivers, loss of spawning areas and water pollution.

According to Nabiollah Khoon-Mirzaei head of Iran Fisheries Organization, due to being enclosed body of water and excessive fishing, the sturgeon population remains shrinking.

So five Caspian states have banned the exploitation of these reserves in an agreement signed during the third meeting of the Commission on conservation and rational use of water bio resources of the Caspian Sea held in Tehran.

Referring to the overfishing of sturgeon after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, he stated that the members of the Commission include Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Iran considered extending the ban for more than a year, however, since some countries did not agree to a multi-year ban, a one-year deal was set.



Iran had produced 6 tons of aquaculture caviar and 2,800 tons of caviar fish meat last year, while looking forward to reach an output of 100 tons of caviar and 10,000 tons of caviar fish meat by 2025.

Iran will host the summit next year, as well.

Pointing out that commercial fishing is banned since 2014, he added that we will not have a plan for commercial fishing and hope

that the sturgeon population face expansion.

Exploitation of this fish is done only for research and restoration purposes, and any fisherman who accidentally catch a sturgeon must give it to research institutes for the

restoration and research, he said.

He further stated that Iran had produced 6 tons of aquaculture caviar and 2,800 tons of caviar fish meat last year.

“Sturgeon breeding is carried out in more than 20 provinces of the country. We look forward to enhance it throughout the whole provinces as studies have been carried out in this regard.”

“There are currently 128 sturgeon farms in the country that are breeding the species, and we are planning to reach an output of 100 tons of caviar and 10,000 tons of caviar fish meat by 2025.”

He added that so far more than 230,000 people have been employed in the fisheries sector.

“According to the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan (2016-2021), we should reach 1.5 million tons of aquaculture production, while we were ahead of schedule last year and reached 1.2 million tons of fishery products.

Per capita consumption of fishery products must be up to 12kg up, which was 12.1 kg last year.

Last year, the share of Caspian Sea from 773,000 tons of fishery was 42,000 tons which constitute 5.4 percent of the whole country’s fishery, and more than 94 percent of which is related to the Oman Sea and the Persian Gulf,” he explained.

Caspian Sea situation is endangering aquatic life and needs more care, he highlighted, concluding, fisheries industry is growing as fishery production has been 40-fold since past 40 years.

Iranian man on camelback journey carrying message of conservation



SOCIETY

TEHRAN — Mohammad Amiri-Roudan, an Iranian traveler and athlete, who started a journey across the globe on camelback to promote conservation measures for endangered two-humped (Bactrian) camel, has entered the Republic of Azerbaijan.

He started the trip on May 23, 2019 from a lagoon in Sirik county in southern Hormozgan province to carry a message for supporting the preservation of the valuable animal to the world.

The trip is organized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in collaboration with Animal Science Research Institute of Iran, according to IRNA.

The journey is estimated to last for two-and-a-half years, passing Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey. Then, in coordination with the FAO office in Italy, he will determine his next destinations which will probably include 50 countries around the Asia, Eu-

rope, Americas, and Oceania.

The Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*) is a large, even-toed ungulate native to the steppes of Central Asia, which has two humps on its back, in contrast to the single-humped dromedary camel. Its population of two million exists mainly in the domesticated form. Their name comes from the ancient historical region of Bactria.

Domesticated Bactrian camels have served as pack animals in inner Asia since ancient times. With its tolerance for cold, drought, and high altitudes, it enabled the travel of caravans on the Silk Road.

A small number of feral Bactrian camels still roam the Mangystau province of southwest Kazakhstan and the Nubra Valley in India.

In many parts of Iran, the species has disappeared. It is endangered in Ardebil province where once a large population of the rare species lived.

Health ministry pursuing to provide medicine for SMA patients



SOCIETY

TEHRAN — The Ministry of Health is trying to provide medicines for patients with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and other rare diseases, IRIB news agency reported on Friday.

Some medicines, especially those needed for SMA patients and certain rare diseases which are only made by American pharmaceutical companies, are not imported to the country, Health Minister Saeed Namaki said.

“I wrote two letters to World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom, over the past few days, and also to some NGOs hoping that we would be able to resolve the issue,” Namaki noted.

He added that medicine provision for all patients have been hindered, but it can be said that this year’s

medicine shortage is one-third of last year’s.

Spinal muscular atrophy is a disease that robs people of physical strength by affecting the motor nerve cells in the spinal cord, taking away the ability to walk, eat, or breathe. It is the number one genetic cause of death for infants.

SMA is caused by a mutation in the survival motor neuron gene 1 (SMN1). In a healthy person, this gene produces a protein that is critical to the function of the nerves that control our muscles. Without it, those nerve cells cannot properly function and eventually die, leading to debilitating and sometimes fatal muscle weakness.

SMA affects approximately 1 in 11,000 births, affecting any race or gender.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

3 million Iranians have organ donor cards

Some three million Iranians have organ donor cards and some 10 percent have signed online consent forms for organ donation, Farahnaz Sadeq-Beigi, head of organ procurement program in Masih Daneshvari Hospital, a national research institute for tuberculosis and lung diseases, has said.

Traffic accidents are the main reasons of brain deaths in Iran, she said, lamenting that out of 4,000 brain deaths reported by forensics only 1,000 donate their organs.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“demi-”

■ **Meaning:** half

■ **For example:** He caused the horse to make a **demi-volte** across the path.

PHRASAL VERB

Open up

■ **Meaning:** if opportunities open up, or a new situation opens them up, they become available or possible

■ **For example:** With a microscope, a whole new world of investigation opens up.

IDIOM

Cross the line

■ **Explanation:** to go beyond the authorized limits and do something which is not acceptable

■ **For example:** He has an unpleasant habit of telling jokes that really cross the line.

۳ میلیون نفر در کشور کارت اهدا عضو دریافت کردند

فرحناز صادق بیگی مسئول واحد فراهم آوری اعضا بیمارستان مسیح دانشوری اظهارداشت: تاکنون ۳ میلیون نفر از افراد کشور کارت اهدا عضو دریافت کرده اند و ۱۰ درصد از افراد کشور در سامانه های مختلفی که در جهت اعلام رضایت در زمینه اهدای عضو راه اندازی شده ثبت نام کرده اند.

وی تصادفات رانندگی را شایع ترین علت مرگ مغزی دانست و گفت: سالیانه ۴ هزار مورد مرگ مغزی در کشور ثبت می شود که سال گذشته تنها ۱۰۰۰ نفر از این افراد قابلیت اهدای عضو را داشته اند.

U.S. legal experts say Soleimani assassination violated international law

Iraqi parliament speaker denounces U.S. strike as ‘breach of Iraqi sovereignty’

➔ and said the attack was unlawful under international and U.S. law.

Meanwhile, the U.S. assassination of Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani, has prompted questions over whether President Donald Trump had the legal authority to order Friday’s killing.

Top Democrats question whether Trump needed to seek congressional approval for the raid.

“It’s debatable whether there was legal justification for this strike,” Democratic Senator Chris Murphy said in a news conference on Friday.

“This is the equivalent of the Iranians assassinating the U.S. secretary of defense. If the Iranians were to assassinate the U.S. secretary of defense we would consider that an act of war and we would respond disproportionately,” Murphy said.

The answer largely depends on the facts the Trump administration based its decision - facts that may never be made public.

U.S. president may use force, short of war, to protect American interests as the commander-in-chief under Article II of the Constitution, said Bobby Chesney, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law who specializes in national security issues.

“If the facts are as the defense department said, then the president relatively clearly has Article II authority to act in self-defense of American lives,” Chesney told The Associated Press news agency.

Escalation

But some analysts and US members of Congress said Trump appears to be crossing the line put forth in the 1973 War Powers Act, by risking a major escalation with Iran. The landmark legislation says that sustained hostilities that put US forces in harm’s way require prior approval by Congress.

“Middle East wars don’t happen by accident,” said Aaron David Miller, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC.

“They are preceded by actions, misperceptions until one side takes a new step that elevates things to a new level and that is essentially what the assassination of Soleimani means,” Miller told Al Jazeera.

“The new place that we are in is that the shadow war is over,” he said. “This raised the stakes considerably beyond the pattern of tit-for-tat that has governed the Iran-Israel relationship and the Iran-US relationship for years.”

Jeremy Hunt warns of a



“very, very risky situation”

Former UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has warned of a “very, very risky situation” caused by “extreme” actions by both the US and Iran.

Speaking to the BBC on Saturday, Hunt said: “It’s an incredibly dangerous game of chicken that’s going on at the moment, because both sides have calculated that the other side cannot afford, and doesn’t want, to go to war.”

This is a very difficult situation for allies of the United States, like ourselves, because I happen to be someone who believes that the world is safer when America is involved in what’s happening beyond its shores, and the UK cannot afford to be neutral if we want to be a serious, global player.

Meanwhile, the UK opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn has written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to request answers on whether the UK was informed in advance of US President Donald Trump’s decision to launch an attack on Iran’s military leader Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

Corbyn also asked whether “in its communication with the US has the UK government expressed its opposition to this action.”

On Friday, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab urged “all parties to de-escalate.” He said the UK government had “always recognized the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force led by Qassem Soleimani,” but that “further conflict is in none of our interests.”

NATO suspends training missions in Iraq

NATO has suspended training missions

in Iraq, a spokesman for the alliance said, following the US killing of Soleimani.

“NATO’s mission is continuing, but training activities are currently suspended,” said the spokesman, Dylan White.

He also confirmed that NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg had spoken by telephone with US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper “following recent developments”.

The NATO mission in Iraq, which numbers in the hundreds, trains the country’s security forces at the request of Baghdad to prevent the return of ISIL.

U.S.-led coalition scales back operations

The U.S.-led coalition fighting the ISIL (ISIS) group has scaled back operations, a U.S. defense official told AFP news agency on Saturday.

“Our first priority is protecting coalition personnel,” the official said, saying the U.S.-led force had “limited” their training and other operations.

“It’s not a halt,” the source said, adding: “We have increased security and defensive measures at Iraqi bases that host coalition troops.”

Britain warns nationals against travel to Iraq, Iran

Britain warned its nationals to avoid all travel to Iraq, outside the Kurdistan region, and to avoid all but essential travel to Iran.

“Given heightened tensions in the region, the Foreign Office now advise people not to travel to Iraq, with the exception of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and to consider carefully whether it’s essential to travel to Iran,” Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement.

“We will keep this under review.”

Iraqi parliament expected to meet

The Iraqi parliament is due to have an emergency session on Sunday in response to caretaker Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi’s call to take measures to preserve Iraq’s security.

“There are increasing calls for the full withdrawal of foreign troops, including U.S. troops from Iraq,” Al Jazeera’s Foltyn, reporting from Baghdad, said.

“It is unclear how the procedure for that would unfold.”

Iraqi parliament speaker denounces U.S. strike as ‘breach of Iraqi sovereignty’

Iraq’s Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi has denounced as a “flagrant” breach of Iraqi sovereignty a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad that targeted and assassinated Iran’s Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Units (PMU).

“Yesterday’s targeting of a military commander in Iraq’s armed forces near Baghdad international airport is a flagrant breach of sovereignty and violation of international agreements,” Halbousi said in a statement on Friday.

He urged the government to take all necessary steps to prevent such attacks, but said, “Iraq must avoid becoming a battlefield or a side in any regional or international conflict.”

Iraq’s National Security Council denounces U.S. assassination of Lt. Gen. Soleimani

Iraq’s National Security Council has condemned a U.S. airstrike that led to the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

Late on Friday, Iraq’s National Security Council held a meeting, chaired by Iraqi Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Adel Abdul-Mahdi, and strongly lambasted the U.S. assassination of the top Iranian general and his comrades near Baghdad International Airport in the early hours of Friday.

The council also discussed new developments in the security situation and related issues in the Arab country in the wake of the U.S. airstrike, which led to “the martyrdom of a number of leading figures.”

(Source: agencies)

53 dead in landslides, flash floods in Indonesia’s capital

Landslides and floods triggered by torrential downpours have left at least 53 people dead in and around Indonesia’s capital, as rescuers struggled to search for people apparently buried under tons of mud, officials said Saturday.

Monsoon rains and rising rivers submerged a dozen districts in the greater Jakarta area and caused landslides that buried at least a dozen people.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesman Agus Wibowo said the fatalities included those who had drowned or been electrocuted since rivers broke their banks early Wednesday after extreme torrential rains hit on New Year’s Eve. Three elderly people died of hypothermia.

It’s the worst flooding in the area since 2007, when 80 people were killed over 10 days.

Rescuers recovered more bodies as flash floods and mudslides destroyed Sukamulia village in Bogor district. They were searching for a villager who was missing in a landslide in Lebak, a district in neighboring Banten province, Wibowo said.

The number of fatalities was expected to increase, with rescuers and villagers also searching for at least three people

believed to be buried in another landslide in Cigudeg village in Bogor district, said Ridwan, the village’s secretary, who goes by a single name.

Ridwan said bad weather, blackouts and mudslides were hampering rescue efforts. He said rescuers Saturday managed to reach eight hamlets that had been isolated for days by cut-off roads and mudslides and rescued more than 1,700 villagers in weak condition.

Four days after the region of 30 million people was struck by flash floods, waters have receded in many middle-class districts, but conditions remained grim in narrow riverside alleys where the city’s poor live.

Government data showed that some 173,000 people were still unable to return home and were crammed at damp emergency shelters, mostly in the hardest-hit area of Bekasi. Much of the city was still submerged in muddy waters up to 2 meters (6.5 feet) high, according to the disaster agency.

Indonesia’s Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency said that more downpours were forecast for the capital in the coming days, and that the potential for ex-



treme rainfall will continue until next month across the vast archipelago nation. The government Friday started cloud seeding in an attempt to divert rain clouds from reaching greater Jakarta to prevent possible flooding, the agency said.

(Source: AP)

Iraqis mourn Soleimani

endearingly etched in the minds of many Iraqis.

Their massive turnout in Saturday’s funeral is both a testimony to Soleimani’s popularity among many Iraqis and a message to the U.S. which made its stay in the Arab country more unwelcome with the extrajudicial killing, observers say. In all, 10 people – five Iraqis and five Iranians – were killed in Friday morning’s U.S. strike on their motorcade just outside Baghdad airport as Soleimani’s flight arrived from Syria, leading to speculations that Israeli intelligence played a role.

On Saturday, Iraq’s Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi joined Muhandis associate Hadi al-Ameri, senior cleric Ammar al-Hakim and other important figures in a large crowd accompanying the coffins.

Ameri, who has been named as the successor to Muhandis, and many other Iraqi leaders

have called on all factions in Iraq to unite and expel foreign troops.

“We call on all national forces to unify their stance in order to expel foreign troops whose presence has become pointless in Iraq,” Ameri told national television on Friday.

The cortege set off around Kadhimiya, a pilgrimage district of Baghdad, before heading to the Green Zone government and diplomatic district where a state funeral was to be held attended by top dignitaries.

‘Ready to fight’

Some of the mourners called on Iraq and the PMF to respond to the attack, saying it violated Iraqi sovereignty and targeted their fighters.

“We want the Hashd and the Iraqi government to respond to the U.S. attack in an appropriate manner,” said Ali, 24, who described the killings

as “very painful”.

“If a political response isn’t enough, then militarily one is necessary,” he added.

“This is a very sad day for all of us. But each fighter [in the PMF] considers himself a martyr and so we are ready to give up our lives like our leaders did,” said Hussein.

“The U.S. has opened a new chapter in its relations with Iraq and made clear that it is the real enemy,” said Hussein.

“As part of the military, the Hashd al-Shaabi will do what the government orders us to do. We are ready to fight,” he added.

The Iran-backed PMF was integrated into Iraq’s armed forces last year, but critics say that some factions continue to operate independently of Baghdad.

(Source: agencies)

Palestinians in Gaza mourn Iran’s Soleimani

Hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip Saturday mourned the death of Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander Qassem Soleimani, killed by a U.S. air strike in Iraq.

Leaders of the group Hamas, which rules Gaza, and of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad faction, joined mourners at a tent erected in Soleimani’s honor in the heart of Gaza City.

Flags of the United States and Israel were laid on the ground for visitors to tread on as they entered, passing murals of Soleimani. The flags were later set on fire.

“We are loyal to those who stood with the resistance and with Palestine and we hold the U.S. administration and the Zionist occupation fully responsible for the consequences of this deplorable crime,” said Ismail Radwan, a Hamas official.

(Source: Reuters)

Hezbollah urges swift govt. to cope with regional tensions

Lebanese officials should speed up the formation of a new government before they have to grapple with political and security consequences of the U.S. assassination of Iran’s Qassem Soleimani, a Hezbollah official warned.

The Hezbollah official’s warning came as last-minute snags over some names of Christian and Muslim ministers delayed the formation of a new government until next week.

“The assassination of Gen. Soleimani should serve as an occasion to accelerate the government formation before political and security developments occur in the region that will adversely affect the formation process,” a Hezbollah official told The Daily Star. He was apparently referring to Iran’s expected retaliation to Soleimani’s killing that might target U.S. interests or military posts in the Persian Gulf region.

Noting that all obstacles to the Cabinet formation had been eliminated, the official said: “We expect the new government to be formed at the beginning of next week.”

Asked whether the Middle East was descending toward a military confrontation between the U.S. and Iran after the Islamic Republic and its allies vowed to avenge Soleimani’s killing, the Hezbollah official said: “Iran’s Supreme National Security Council today [Friday] vowed harsh retaliation. This will put the entire region on the verge of several eventualities because what happened was a blow to the ‘Resistance Axis’ which will examine the options of revenge.”

The official said Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah was expected to expound on the Resistance Axis’ response in a televised speech Sunday.

(Source: daily Star)

Bushfires rage out of control across southeast Australia

Bushfires burned dangerously out of control on Australia’s east coast on Saturday, fanned by high temperatures and strong winds that had firefighters battling to save lives and property, as a change in wind conditions merged several large fire fronts.

By late evening, Victoria had 14 fires rated at emergency or evacuate warning levels, and New South Wales had 11 rated emergency, with more than 150 others burning across the states. New fires had started, and others had broken containment lines.

“There are a number of fires that are coming together - very strong, very large, intense fires that are creating some of these fire-generated thunderstorms,” New South Wales Rural Fire Service (RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said at an evening briefing.

“And unfortunately we’ve still got many hours to go of these elevated and dangerous conditions.”

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) said conditions were deteriorating rapidly as a gusty southerly wind change pushed up the coast and smoke plumes from the fires triggered storms.

Authorities are worried the fires could turn out to be worse than New Year’s Eve, when they burnt massive tracts of bushland and forced thousands of residents and summer holidaymakers to seek refuge on beaches.

In Victoria, Premier Daniel Andrews said while conditions were difficult, the job of firefighters had been made easier by tens of thousands of people following advice to evacuate.

It may be Sunday or later before damage assessments can be made. Prime Minister Scott Morrison put the national death toll from the current fire season, which began in September, at 23. Twelve of those are from this week’s fires alone.

In updates, the NSW RFS repeatedly delivered the same blunt advice to those who had not evacuated at-risk areas: “It is too late to leave. Seek shelter as the fire approaches.”

Residents used social media to post photos of the sky turning black and red from the smoke and glare of the fires, including in the Victorian town of Mallacoota, where around 1,000 people were evacuated by sea on Friday.

(Source: Reuters)

Tens of thousands march in southern India to protest citizenship law

Over one hundred thousand protesters, many carrying the Indian tricolor flag, took part in a peaceful march in the southern city of Hyderabad Saturday, chanting slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s new citizenship law.

The protest, dubbed the ‘Million March’, was organised by an umbrella group of Muslim and civil society organisations. More than 40 percent of Hyderabad’s estimated population of nearly 7 million are Muslims.

Demonstrators were still pouring into the protest site late Saturday afternoon, according to a Reuters witness, despite police saying no march would be allowed and that permission had only been granted for a 1,000-person gathering.

The Indian government has faced weeks of acrimonious and, at times, violent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was passed by Modi’s government in December.

The Hyderabad protesters held placards with slogans including “Withdraw CAA immediately,” and “India’s only religion is Secularism.” The Reuters witness said the protest remained peaceful, and estimated that more than one hundred thousand people were in attendance.

(Source: DPA)

Haftar issues ‘call to arms’ over possible Turkey intervention

Renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar has called on Libyans to take up arms in response to a prospective military intervention from Turkey aimed at shoring up the UN-recognized government in Tripoli.

The beleaguered Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), headed by Fayez al-Sarraj, has been under sustained attack since April by Haftar, whose self-styled

Libyan National Army (LNA) supports a rival administration based in the east of the country. Turkey’s parliament on Thursday approved the deployment of troops to Libya after it received a request for military support from Sarraj’s government, which is recognized by the international community.

“We accept the challenge and declare jihad and a call to arms,” said Haftar in a televised

address on Friday. He urged “all Libyans” to bear arms, “men and women, soldiers and civilians, to defend our land and our honor”.

He said it was no longer a question of liberating Tripoli from militias, but of “facing a colonizer”, accusing Ankara of wanting to “regain control of Libya”, a former province of the Ottoman Empire. The GNA has sought Turkey’s support as it fends off an offensive

by Haftar’s forces, which control the east and swept through southern Libya in early 2019.

Meanwhile, on Friday Haftar’s forces said they had carried out air strikes in several places, including south of the city of Sirte and in Tripoli. Sirte lies in the centre of Libya’s coastline, on the dividing line between the warring factions.

(Source: al Jazeera)

USA Soccer cancels plans for men’s team to train in Doha

The US Soccer Federation said Friday it had cancelled plans for the men’s national team to train in Doha, Qatar, this month “due to the developing situation in the region.”

The decision was announced after the United States assassinated top Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, who was killed in an air attack in Iraq’s capital Baghdad.

The federation said it was seeking a new site for the training camp, scheduled for January 5-25, in the United States.

The Americans are scheduled to play a friendly match against Costa Rica on February 1 in Carson, California, near Los Angeles.

“We are working with the Qatar Football Association to find an opportunity in the near future for our team to experience Qatar’s world-class facilities and hospitality,” USA Soccer said in its statement.

US Soccer had hoped the camp in Qatar would give players a chance to check out the country that will host the 2022 World Cup.

US coach Gregg Berhalter had already called 25 players to participate in the training camp, most of them Major League Soccer players.

(Source: AFP)

Guingamp forward Julian killed in car crash

Guingamp forward Nathael Julian has died in an accident at the age of 23, the French Ligue 2 side said in a statement on Friday.

“L’En Avant Guingamp is in mourning,” said the club. “The club had the immense pain to learn this afternoon of the accidental death of its player Nathael Julian.



“On this tragic day, all members of the club join together to express their sad condolences to Nathael’s family.”

It did not give any further details. French media, including the website of L’Equipe, said he died in a car crash after a training session.

Julian was raised at Le Havre where he made his professional debut in Ligue 2 in 2015.

He went on to make 42 appearances for Le Havre, scoring nine goals, before joining Guingamp in January 2018 when they were in Ligue 1.

He made 10 top flight appearances before being loaned to Valenciennes in January last year and returned to Guingamp in June. Guingamp were relegated last season.

(Source: Reuters)

Ex-England midfielder talks about his mental health struggles

Former England midfielder Paul Merson says he hopes to help people struggling with their mental health by revealing that his own battle left him wanting to take his own life.

Kick-offs at this weekend’s FA Cup third-round matches will be delayed for 60 seconds to prompt fans to consider their wellbeing.

Merson, 51, says he has been sober for a year after dealing with alcoholism.

“Now I know I have an illness. Before, I used to beat myself up,” he said.

Merson was capped 21 times by England between 1991 and 1998 and scored 78 goals in 327 games for Arsenal.

He previously spoke about his gambling addiction in March 2019.

Writing in his Daily Star column, Merson added: “When I see this weekend’s FA Cup games kicking off a minute later I will remember that time when things got dark and think: ‘Thank god that’s not how I feel any more.’

“This time last year, I wanted to kill myself.

“I don’t want to kill myself any more. I don’t have those thoughts.

“I’m telling you this because I hope it helps someone.”

In 2003, Merson received help from the Sporting Chance clinic, set up by former Arsenal and England team-mate Tony Adams, after saying he was unable to stop betting and had run up huge losses, including £30,000 on the outcome of one football match.

In 2012, he was given a 14-month-driving ban after pleading guilty to drink-driving following a motorway crash.

“I was on my own, which is not the best place when you’re down. Isolating yourself, that’s where the illness wants you,” Merson said.

“On Monday, I’ll have been a year sober. I keep my life to one day at a time.”

(Source: BBC)

Bayern to sign young Schalke keeper on free transfer

Goalkeeper Alexander Nuebel has agreed to join Bayern Munich on a free transfer becoming he latest potential successor to Manuel Neuer, the club announced on Saturday.

The 23-year-old, who has played 17 times for Germany’s under-21 team, had refused to extend his contract at Schalke and will join the German champions at the end of the season on a five-year contract.

Neuer, who moved from Schalke in 2011, has been injury prone in recent years but the 33-year-old has started 26 games this season and remains the Bayern captain. He is reportedly about to sign a two-year contract extension.

Nuebel earned a four-match suspension in December after catching Frankfurt’s Mijat Gacinovic in the chest with a flying kick after missing the ball.

Nuebel’s salary at Bayern will be around 5.5 million euros (\$6.14 million) per season, AFP subsidiary SID reported, which is less than the seven million offer from Schalke he turned down in December.

(Source: Goal)

Klopp calls for end to England’s fixture mayhem

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp on Friday stepped up his calls to protect players from burn-out after claiming England’s festive fixture pile-up was bad for the sport.

Klopp is one of a growing number of Premier League managers frustrated by the demands placed on top-flight teams by England’s domestic competitions and television’s unquenchable thirst to show the games.

Liverpool are down to 12 fit senior outfield players after a host of injuries in recent weeks, while Tottenham star Harry Kane suffered a torn hamstring on New Year’s Day and Newcastle lost four players in one match.

Klopp believes coaches and football people should be included in the discussion with the sport’s governing bodies and television companies to ensure a proper solution can be found.

“I told what I had to say to UEFA personally, I told FIFA sometimes in interviews because I don’t know anyone there and I don’t think the Premier League, FA (Football Association) or Football League



are in any doubt of my opinion,” Klopp told reporters on Friday.

“I just do that not because of me but because I think someone has to speak for

the players.

“If you have a good friend and you see him twice a year, brilliant. Best time of your life. If you see him every day you think

Ibrahimovic vows to kick-start Milan as Conte’s Inter seek rare win at Napoli



Zlatan Ibrahimovic has vowed to kick-start struggling AC Milan’s Serie A season as their local rivals Inter Milan recommence a title battle with Juventus this weekend after the end of the winter break.

Milan play host to Sampdoria on Monday, their first game since the humiliating 5-0 goal defeat to Atalanta last month which sparked Ibrahimovic’s return.

“I’m ready and I really hope I can play,” said the 38-year-old Ibrahimovic as he returned to Milan nine years after his departure for Paris Saint-Germain.

“Things need to be improved on the pitch and that’s why I’m here. I know what I have to do, Zlatan is still here.”

Seven-time European champions Milan are 11th in the table, 14 points off the Champions League places and just seven points clear of the relegation zone.

By contrast Inter are challenging champions Juventus’ hegemony at the top of Serie A, with both sides level on 42 points after 17 games.

Antonio Conte’s Inter travel to Napoli, while Juve are at home against sixth-placed Cagliari, this season’s surprise package who are well in the hunt for Champions League football.

Inter Milan have not won at Napoli’s Stadio San Paolo since October 1997 but last season’s runners-up are eighth this term, with Gennaro Gattuso replacing Carlo Ancelotti last month.

“Inter have been strong in previous years but they have improved even more under Conte,” said Napoli defender Mario Rui.

“They will make us suffer, but we are ready.”

Juventus return to action after their Italian Super Cup defeat to Lazio against

a Cagliari side that had been in impressive form before back-to-back losses.

Meanwhile red-hot Lazio, six points behind in third with a game in hand, are looking increasingly dangerous.

Simone Inzaghi’s side, who have not lost since their 1-0 defeat to Inter in late September, can push their league winning streak to nine games against relegation-threatened Brescia.

The Roman side have scored two goals or more in each of their last 11 league games since that Inter defeat, the first team to achieve that feat since the legendary ‘Grande Torino’ side back in 1948.

One point behind Lazio in fourth are capital city rivals Roma, who host Torino amid takeover talks with US billionaire Dan Friedkin.

Fiorentina and Genoa start the calendar year with new coaches.

Giuseppe Iachini’s first game with 15th-placed Fiorentina will be at Bologna, a team they are unbeaten against in 10 games.

Bottom club Genoa have brought in reinforcements for Davide Nicola’s first game against Sassuolo.

Italy goalkeeper Mattia Perin returns from Juventus along with Swiss midfielder Valon Behrami and Bologna striker Mattia Destro.

As veteran Ibrahimovic prepares to start for AC Milan, fellow Swede Dejan Kulusevski, 19, returns to Parma on loan after signing a five-year deal with champions Juventus.

The promising teenager has had a breakthrough season since going on loan from Atalanta to Parma in June, scoring four goals and setting up another seven in 17 games. He will be up against his parent club this weekend.

(Source: Eurosport)

Sixers’ Joel Embiid admits losing streak ‘taking toll on me’



Coach Brett Brown attempted to take a positive approach after the Philadelphia 76ers’ 118-108 loss to the Houston Rockets on Friday night.

It was the 76ers’ fourth consecutive loss, their longest losing streak since December 2017, but Brown said he liked the way his team competed by pulling to within five points in the fourth quarter.

It was a stark contrast to his comments after the Dec. 27 loss to the Orlando Magic that started the long road trip and losing streak. That day, Brown dismissed a comment about the Sixers’ late rally, saying it was “hollow praise to go there.”

Brown’s praise Friday night rang hollow in the 76ers’ locker room, where players acknowledged the frustration that was often evident by bad body language displayed on the floor during their loss to the Rockets.

“Losing four in a row sucks, and it doesn’t feel like we’re getting better,” two-time All-Star center Joel Embiid said. “So it is frustrating. ... I care about winning. It’s taking a toll on me. All I care about is winning. It sucks. We’ve got to find a way. I guess we’ve got to keep fighting.”

The Sixers have sunk to sixth place in the Eastern Conference with a 23-14 record after losing seven of their past 10 games. They haven’t won since a convincing victory over the East-leading Milwaukee Bucks on Christmas Day, matching the injury-ravaged Brooklyn Nets for the league’s longest active losing streak.

“We’ve just got to stay locked in,” said point guard Ben Simmons, who stuffed the box score with 29 points, 13 rebounds, 11 assists, 4 blocks and 3 steals in the

after five days ‘What the heck?’.

“But what we do is throw football at the people. How many games were on Boxing Day? There were maybe some men, probably, who watched all of them live.

“I don’t think that’s good for their relationship. It’s not good for mine and I already watch a lot of football.”

Klopp wants all parties to get together and come up with a sustainable plan and he has volunteered to attend.

“The solution is to bring all these people together and try to think one time in all these negotiations about the players,” he added.

“Other people are sitting there and they are not football people. We need to talk with football people, I think there is a solution possible.

“We love this game but in the end we have to make sure that we can all come through and in the end the best team wins and not the most lucky with injuries. If you need me in the discussion I am pretty much there.”

(Source: Mirror)

Cavani is crazy for Atletico Madrid



Cavani has been guaranteed that PSG will not stand in his way to prevent this deal after a meeting with sporting director Leonardo where they shared their plans.

The French club even offered him a contract renewal beyond his deal which expires in June, but given that it was not accepted, they were happy to facilitate

his departure.

His excellent professionalism and behaviour since moving to Ligue 1 and his age, close to celebrating his 33rd birthday, whilst not enjoying much playing time, mean it is an end to his time in France.

Now the only doubt remains whether Atletico can organise their wage cap in order to be able to make the deal happen.

With the limit fixed by LaLiga already almost met, the sale of Thomas Lemar to the Premier League is seen as the best solution.

Having signed 70 percent of his rights for 72 million euros in 2018, the club are not keen to give him away at a bargain price, but a destination must be found which suits all parties.

As things stand at present, Atletico would only be able to sign a striker if they were to come on loan and with low wages, certainly not a profile which Cavani is looking to fulfil.

(Source: Marca)

Jahanbakhsh’s recent performances show he’s exactly what Brighton didn’t realize they needed

No one believed it would be possible for Alireza Jahanbakhsh to recover from his woeful first season at Brighton, let alone think he had the capability to score one of the greatest goals of the decade so far.

Yes, you’ve probably heard his name a fair bit recently, and with good reason too. Jahanbakhsh is the man who has suddenly hit the ground running in the Premier League over the last week or so for Brighton.

Making his first start of the season against Bournemouth, it took just three minutes for the attacker to open the scoring at the AMEX. It was his first goal in a Seagulls shirt and his tearful celebration showed just how much it meant to him.

Just four days later on New Year’s Day, the Iran international was controversially dropped to the bench for Albion’s meeting with Chelsea. 1-0 down with just under half an hour remaining, manager Graham Potter chose to bring Jahanbakhsh onto the field to make the difference - and boy oh boy did he do just that.

Running at defenders and causing problems from the moment he came on, he sparked the Seagulls into life and with around five minutes remaining on the clock produced a moment of brilliance.

Leandro Trossard delivered a corner deep into Chelsea’s box which captain Lewis Dunk rose highest to head back into a dangerous area. Jahanbakhsh, anticipating the flight of the ball and in the right place at the right time, acrobatically converted into the back of the net on the volley. It was a stellar overhead kick from around 15 yards and Blues goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga had no chance.

It was a moment he had waited for and the moment he had dreamed of for so long. Finally, he had proven the doubters wrong. For now, at least.

But now is the time for Jahanbakhsh to push on. He has all the tools he needs to succeed from this point onwards - the



confidence, the desire and the support of the fans. It was clear to see that the AMEX crowd was absolutely delighted for him and the roar that followed the announcement of his goal in the stadium would have filled him with nothing but sheer belief that he can continue this purple patch.

Brighton have struggled for goals this season. Yes, they’ve scored more than a number of their key rivals, but when you consider how well they keep the ball in certain games, you would expect a lot more on the goal front. They simply haven’t created or converted enough clear-cut chances - something that

has hindered their position in the Premier League standings.

What Jahanbakhsh offers is another dimension for Brighton. The likes of Trossard, Aaron Mooy and Pascal Groß are fantastic creators but they don’t have the same urgency that their Iranian teammate boasts. The 26-year-old is always looking to drive forward rather than go backwards and when he has enough confidence under his wing he has the capability to catch out his opponent and make the difference.

So why didn’t he perform like this last season, you may ask? It’s not like he didn’t have enough opportunities to succeed - he played on 25 occasions for the Seagulls. Well, it’s that word beginning with the letter ‘C’ again. It’s confidence. It was something he was stripped of within just a few matches in Albion colors.

Under Chris Hughton, the life was suddenly sucked out of Jahanbakhsh’s game. Fitting into a rigid system as a defensive winger, he was restricted from taking defenders on and being able to drive forward with the ball. It was a match made in hell.

Graham Potter’s arrival has brought about a shift for the entire club as his attacking mentality has transformed the way Brighton play. Throughout the first few months of the season, Jahanbakhsh was seen as simply a rotational option and due to his poor start in the Premier League, it seemed Potter didn’t believe he was the best option to provide a goalscoring threat.

However, with his remarkable determination to succeed, in conjunction with the reluctance to leave the club despite the ever-present speculation, he has finally made the all-important breakthrough into his manager’s plans.

It looks as if he may remain there too, as Albion look to improve their consistency and get more points on the board. They didn’t even realize what they had been missing.

(Source: 96min.com)

Iran’s flag hoisted at Youth Olympic Village



S P O R T S T E H R A N —The national flag of Iran was hoisted at the athletes’ village for the 2020 Winter Youth Olympics.

Six skiers will represent Iran at the Games. Artemis Hosseini and Roham Saba will participate at Alpine skiing.

Farnoush Shemshaki and Amirhossein Bandali will compete at cross-country skiing and Roxana Saveh Shemshaki and Ali Kalhor will represent Iran at ski mountaineering.

During the Games, the Vortex will serve as the main Youth Olympic Village for the

athletes and their delegations.

The Vortex is a 27-metre high, ring-shaped construction made up of 712 units spread along a 1 per cent sloped, 2.8km single-spiral ramp.

The Lausanne 2020 Youth Olympic Games will take place from Jan. 9 to 22, 2020 with 1,880 athletes (15-18 years old) from more than 70 countries.

The competitions will take place in the cantons of Vaud (Lausanne, La Vallée de Joux, Leysin, les Diablerets, Villars), Valais (Champéry), Grisons (St. Moritz) and neighboring France (Les Rousses, Les Tuffes stadium).

Iran to send two taekwondo fighters to Paralympic Games



S P O R T S T E H R A N — Iran’s National Paralympic Committee (NPC) will send two taekwondo fighters to the Paralympic Games at Tokyo 2020.

Taekwondo will debut at the Paralympic Games and the athletes will contend in six medal events.

All eyes will be on the ‘Iranian Hurricane’ Mahdi Pourrahnama. Just 23 years old, he already has six World Championship medals in the Men’s K44 -75kg.

He is favorite to win a gold medal in the prestigious event.

Asghar Azizi is another Iranian representative who will be competing in the Men’s K44 +75kg.

The 16th Summer Paralympic Games will be held in Tokyo, Japan from Aug. 25 to Sept. 6, 2020.

A total of 22 sports are scheduled for inclusion in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. Badminton and Taekwondo will be making their debut at the 2020 Paralympic Games.

2020 opens with Olympic qualifying volleyball extravaganza

The New Year begins with a bang just a few days into 2020, as action picks up across the globe with the last five tickets to the women’s volleyball tournament of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics coming up for grabs.

Five qualification tournaments at continental level, starting as of Sunday, will decide the last five teams to make the ultimate sporting event of the world.

One team qualifies from each tournament.

They will join Serbia, China, USA, Brazil, Russia and Italy who had already qualified last August through an intercontinental process. Japan had already secured their spot by default as hosts of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics.

First off the blocks is Africa, with five teams in contention in a round-robin tournament hosted by Cameroon in Yaounde. The hosts will be looking at their second consecutive Olympic appearance, after finishing 11th at Rio 2016.

But they’re up against Kenya, who had two previous Olympic appearances in Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 (on both occasions 11th), as well as African powerhouse Egypt, who are bidding for their first ever qualification to a women’s tournament of the Olympic Games.

Botswana and Nigeria are also after their first Olympic appearance.

The only other African team to have played at the Olympic Games are Algeria (11th in both Beijing 2008 and London 2012) - but they’re not in contention for a ticket this time around.

The hectic ten-day volleyball extravaganza gets in full swing on Tuesday, when Asia, Europe and South America join the fray.

In Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand host six opponents in their quest to make their Olympic debut in Tokyo 2020. The Asian tournament has its seven participants divided



into two pools (Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Australia in Pool A; Iran, Kazakhstan, Korea and Indonesia in Pool B). The top two of each pool advance to crosswise semifinals, followed by the deciding match.

The hosts have to contend with Korea, who have a rich background of 11 prior appearances in 14 editions since the introduction of volleyball in the Olympic Program in 1964 - including a bronze medal in Montreal 1976).

Of the other entrants in the Asian tournament, Kazakhstan have previously competed once in the Olympic Games, finishing 9th in Beijing 2008. North Korea, bronze medalists in Munich 1972, are not in the running this year.

In Europe, no fewer than three previous Olympic medalists are still seeking their spot in Tokyo 2020. The Netherlands, losers of the bronze medal match to USA last time around in Rio 2016, host Germany (silver in Moscow 1980 as East

Germany), Poland (twice bronze in Tokyo 1964 and Mexico City 1968) and Bulgaria (bronze in Moscow 1980).

The European qualifiers feature a total of eight teams in two pools of four (Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the Netherlands and Poland in Pool A; Belgium, Croatia, Germany and Turkey in Pool B). The pools phase will be followed by crosswise semifinals and a deciding match for the ticket to Tokyo 2020.

Of these, Croatia were 7th in Sydney 2000, Germany are looking for their ninth Olympic appearance (combined as East, West and unified) and Turkey were 9th in London 2012, while the hosts aim at their fourth overall Olympics.

Azerbaijan and Belgium have never before qualified to the Olympic Games.

And in Bogota, Colombia are after making their Olympic debut, when they host Peru, Argentina and Venezuela in a single four-team round-robin pool.

All three of Colombia’s opponents have prior Olympic experience, including a silver medal in Seoul 1988 by Peru, who have appeared in the Olympic Games on seven previous occasions.

Argentina were 9th in their sole previous appearance in Rio 2016 and Venezuela ranked 11th in Beijing 2008. Also composed of just four teams in a single round-robin pool are the North & Central America and Caribbean (NORCECA) qualifiers, hosted in Santo Domingo by the Dominican Republic, who look at returning to the Olympic Games after 11th place in Athens 2004 and 5th in London 2012.

Joining them will be Mexico (7th in their only previous appearance when they hosted the Games in Mexico City 1968), Puerto Rico (11th in Rio 2016) and Canada (8th in both Montreal 1976 and Los Angeles 1984, and 9th Atlanta 1996).

(Source: FIVB.org)

Ex-Real Madrid Robinho linked with Esteghlal

Former Real Madrid and Milan forward has been linked with a move to Iranian football giant Esteghlal.

The 35-year-old Brazilian, who currently plays at Istanbul Basaksehir, is not satisfied with his situation in the Turkish top-flight outfit and is going to leave the team.

The media reports claim that Robinho has shown interest in joining Esteghlal.

Esteghlal have recently parted company with its Italian coach Andrea Stramaccioni and Farhad Majidi has replaced him.

Robinho started his playing career in Brazilian team Santos in 2002 and Joined Real Madrid after three years. He has also played for Manchester City, Milan and Guangzhou Evergrande.

Robinho has also made 100 appearances for Brazil and scored 28 goals.

(Source: Calciomercato)

Iran volleyball team arrive in Jiangmen

TASNIM — Iran national volleyball team arrived in Jiangmen, China Saturday morning to participate at the AVC Men’s Volleyball Olympic Qualification Tournament.

Team Melli have been pitted against China, Chinese Taipei and Kazakhstan in Pool A.

Australia, Qatar, India and Korea are in Pool B.

The competition will be held at Jiangmen Sports Center Gymnasium, China from Jan. 7 to 12, 2020 and the champions will secure its place at the Tokyo 2020.

Iran will play Chinese Taipei on Tuesday and face Kazakhstan and China in the following days

Iran U23 packed with seasoned professionals: AFC

Iran U23 football team have traveled to Thailand to participate at the AFC U-23 Championship Thailand 2020 and have a chance to shine in the competition.

It has been 44 long years since Iran U23 football team appeared in an Olympic Games football tournament, but a squad packed with seasoned professionals suggest Islamic Republic of Iran’s future appears a much more interesting story than its past.

While they are sure to be tested in one of the tournament’s most difficult groups, Hamid Estili’s charges appear more than capable of providing goals, the-afc.com reported.

Winger Mohammed Mohebbi scored two of them for the senior national team against Cambodia last October, Mehdi Ghaedi arrives in Thailand after scoring eight in the first half of the season for Esteghlal, and Reza Shekari found the net three times at the 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup.

Also present is 18-year-old wonderkid Allahyar Sayyadmanesh, who became Iran’s youngest ever senior international goal scorer last June, finding the net against Syria just a month after being snapped by Turkish giant Fenerbahce.

(Source: the-afc)

China PR appoint Li Tie as national team head coach

Former Everton midfielder Li Tie was named as head coach of China PR’s men’s football team on Thursday, tasked with reviving their Asian Qualifiers campaign after Marcello Lippi’s departure.

The Chinese Football Association (CFA) said Li, who played in China’s only FIFA World Cup Finals appearance in 2002, is an “outstanding representative of Chinese football players” and was appointed after an open process.

Li is already familiar with the national side having been in temporary charge during the EAFF Championship in Korea Republic last month. The 42-year-old was the manager of Chinese Super League club Wuhan Zall before his appointment.

“It is believed that under the leadership of the coach, the Chinese national men’s football team will work hard to train and prepare scientifically with a high sense of mission and honor,” the CFA said in a statement.

Lippi, the Italian 2006 World Cup-winning head coach, resigned after a 2-1 defeat to Syria left China five points adrift in second in their qualifying group for the FIFA World Cup 2022 Qatar.

Lippi, 71, initially quit in January after taking China to the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019 quarter-finals, where they lost 3-0 to Islamic Republic Iran, and his compatriot Fabio Cannavaro took over as caretaker.

But Cannavaro, also head coach of Chinese Super League champions Guangzhou Evergrande, lost both of his two matches in charge before Lippi returned in May.

The CFA backed Li to “strive to build a national team that is ‘good at fighting and has a good style of work’, and plays every game well”.

(Source: AFP)

Arnold satisfied as Australia, Korea Republic draw practice match

Australia and Korea Republic played to a 1-1 draw in a practice match at the Kuala Lumpur Stadium on Friday ahead of the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020.

Both teams are aiming to win the AFC U23 Championship for the first time and Australia head coach Graham Arnold expressed his satisfaction with the performance of his players.

“I was pleased with the performance given we played two 50-minute halves on a difficult pitch against one of the best teams in Asia,” Arnold said.

“Both teams changed their entire squads at half-time, which provided the opportunity for all our players to acclimatize prior to heading to Bangkok.”

Korea Republic took the lead in the 72nd minute at the Kuala Lumpur Football Stadium with Al Hassan Toure equalising for Australia three minutes later.

Australia will travel to Bangkok on Saturday and play their first AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 match against Iraq on Wednesday. They face Thailand three days later and Bahrain on January 14.

(Source: the-afc)

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GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

When the time comes, a religious leader appears,
and people gather round him like autumn clouds.
Imam Ali (AS)

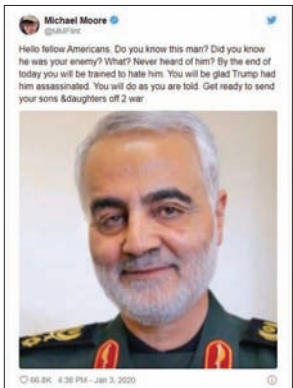
Hollywood melts down over Iran airstrike – label Trump a ‘threat’ to America

LOS ANGELES (The Mix) -- Hollywood celebrities have gone into full meltdown mode today over Donald Trump's Iranian airstrike that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani. In the wake of this airstrike, Hollywood liberals have gone so far as to call Trump a threat to America and to urge people to prepare for war. In fact, some have gone so far as to apologize to Iran. They've taken to social media to spout off against Trump and his actions.

Fox News reported that “Will & Grace” star Debra Messing, a known Trump hater, reshared a 2012 tweet from President Trump that read, “Now that Obama’s poll numbers are in tailspin – watch for him to launch a strike in Libya or Iran. He is desperate.”

“THERE IS A TWEET FOR EVERYTHING. #TrumpIsANationalSecurityThreat,” Messing wrote alongside the tweet.

Actress Rosanna Arquette simply wrote on her Twitter page, “Hitler did the same thing.”



Hollywood icon Rob Reiner claimed that he was worried about the safety of the American people, adding that Trump can't be trusted.

“What a horrible feeling. Having a Commander-In-Chief who you know is a Pathological Liar trying to justify striking the heart of Iran's military,” he wrote.

Rosie O'Donnell, who has been in a bitter feud with Trump for over a decade, could not resist getting in on the action herself.

“Off to war – god help us #RemoveTrump,” she tweeted.

Documentary filmmaker Michael Moore threw a temper tantrum, suggesting that Soleimani should not have been killed.

“Hello fellow Americans,” he tweeted. “Do you know this man? Did you know he was your enemy? What? Never heard of him? By the end of today you will be trained to hate him. You will be glad Trump had him assassinated. You will do as you are told. Get ready to send your sons & daughters off 2 war.”

Actor Alec Baldwin, who has made a name for himself impersonating Trump on “Saturday Night Live,” suggested that Trump only launched the airstrike to distract the public from his impeachment.

“Dear #Iran, The USA has disrespected your country, your flag, your people. 52% of us humbly apologize. We want peace with your nation. We are being held hostage by a terrorist regime. We do not know how to escape. Please do not kill us. #Soleimani” tweeted actress Rose McGowan.

“Trump in full fascist 101 mode-, steal and lie - until there's nothing left and start a war. He's so idiotic he doesn't know he just attacked Iran. And that's not like anywhere else,” tweeted actor John Cusack.

Tehran museum to host End of Terrorism art exhibition

A R T TEHRAN — A selection of artworks from the End of Terrorism Art Competition (the End of Daesh Art Competition) will be showcased in an exhibition at the Sacred Defense Museum in Tehran during February.

The exhibit will be organized as part of the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations, which will start on February 1 to mark the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.



A man visits the End of Terrorism Art Competition exhibition at Tehran's Art Bureau on May 14, 2018. (Tasnim/Masud Shahrestani)

He also expressed his sympathy over the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad and said, “General Soleimani was scheduled to visit the museum within the next week to observe the process of preparing the exhibition.”

He also expressed his hope that the exhibition could showcase some of the bravery of Soleimani and the martyrs who lost their lives in fighting against terrorism and ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Earlier in May 2018, the End of Terrorism Art Competition exhibition was held at Tehran's Art Bureau.

Over 250 cartoons, caricature and posters from artists in 64 countries have been put on view in the three categories of cartoon, caricature and poster at the exhibition for two weeks.

Artist Hassan Ruholamin creates painting in memory of Martyr Soleimani

A R T TEHRAN — Painter d e s k Hassan Ruholamin, who is famed for his epic drawings, has created a painting in memory of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad on Friday.

The painting titled “The Apocalyptic Companion of Aba Abdillah” depicts Soleimani's remains embraced by Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shias.

An image of the artwork was published on Friday on khamenei.ir, the official website of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Ruholamin's paintings usually call to mind the ambience of the Renaissance paintings.

In his works, he regards stories from the history of Islam and contemporary events.

In 2017, he also created a painting of Mohsen Hojaji, an Iranian soldier who was martyred by ISIS terrorists in Syria.

Earlier in November 2016, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art unveiled Ruholamin's painting “The Sky Fell Down”, a large painting featuring the last moments of the life of Imam Hussein (AS).

An exhibition of his paintings was organized at Iran's cultural office in Paris in March 2018.

In January 2019, his collection “The Truth Is with Ali”, which contains paintings about Imam Ali (AS), was showcased in an exhibition Tehran's Niavaran Cultural Center.



“The Apocalyptic Companion of Aba Abdillah” by artist Hassan Ruholamin created in memory of commander Qassem Soleimani was unveiled on khamenei.ir on January 3, 2020. (khamenei.ir)

Writers express sympathy over martyrdom of General Soleimani

C U L T U R E TEHRAN — Iranian writers Mahmud d e s k Dowlatabadi and Ebrahim Hassanbeigi have expressed sympathy over the martyrdom of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

“From the moment I heard the news of the terror attack, I have been asking myself if annihilation is the fate of all honorable children of this land, with any kind of thoughts and attitudes,” Dowlatabadi wrote in a statement published in the Saturday edition of Iran Persian daily.

“Iran has lost one of its eminent children once again with no hesitation, a personality that made a huge barrier against the brutal Daesh and saved our country's borders from their miserable presence. I am also grieved over the loss of the person who I liked from a distance,” the letter adds.

“Kelidar”, “Desert Strata”, “The Trip”, “The Legend of Baba Sobhan”, “The Cowherd”, “Aqil”, “Man” and “Missing Soluch” are among Dowlatabadi's noteworthy credits.

In a letter published by the Persian service of MNA on Saturday, Hassanbeigi wrote, “I thought commander Qassem



Combination photo of writers Ebrahim Hassanbeigi and Mahmud Dowlatabadi.

Soleimani could be the future president of Iran. I had told this to a few friends of mine who are writers.”

“Nobody took it seriously. Perhaps it was not serious.

Cultural organizations condemn commander Qassem Soleimani assassination

C U L T U R E TEHRAN — Some major Iranian cultural d e s k organizations have denounced the U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday, targeting Iran's Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and a number his companions.

In a statement published on Friday, The Iranian House of Cinema, which is the official guild of Iranian cineastes, sent a message of condolences over the martyrdom of the commander.

“The Iranian House of Cinema and Iranian cineastes along with the patient and peace-seeking people of Iran condemn this crime and ask all the world artists to accompany us in censuring violence and terrorism,” the statement reads.

The Iran Music Publishers Guild also expressed condolences over the brave martyrdom of the commander in a message.

“Martyrdom is the art of the men of God,” reads the message, strongly condemning the terrorist action by the U.S. government.

Iranian cineastes also have signed a petition asking

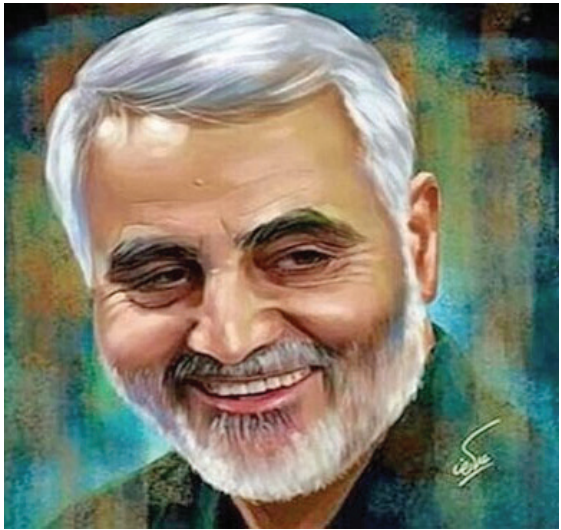
world devotees and peace-seeking people to condemn the terrorist act.

“We Iranian artists from any range of thoughts and viewpoints censure terrorism in any kind,” reads the petition.

“The establishment of new tensions by the U.S. government, which only leads to elevated tensions and death in the Middle East, an increase in the number of weapons sales and the destruction of human resources, is condemned by all the world peace-seeking people,” the petition adds.

“We ask all the scholars, artists and peace-seeking nation of Iran, the region, and the world to censure this terrorist act, which led to the martyrdom of commander Qassem Soleimani,” it concludes.

Homayun Asadian, Ahmadreza Darvish, Kamal Tabrizi, Behruz Shoeibi, Narges Abyar, Mohsen Amiruseifan actors Parviz Parastui, Mohsen Tanabandeh, Farhad Aslani and Alireza Shojanuri are among the cineastes who have signed the petition.



A portrait of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Poets commemorate General Soleimani

A R T TEHRAN — A large group of literati came d e s k together at Tehran's Felestin Cinema on Friday evening to commemorate Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad, during a poetry night entitled “Tough Revenge”.

The poetry night was organized on the sidelines of the 10th Ammar Popular Film Festival, which is currently underway in Tehran.

The session was attended by several prominent poets, including Ali-Mohammad Moaddab, Ahmad Babai, Nafiseh Sadat Musavi, Mohammad-Mehdi Sayyar, Milad Erfanpur, Fatemeh Nanizad and Mobin Ardestani as well as cultural officials and the families of the martyrs who lost their lives

in the 1980s Iran-Iraq war or in fighting against terrorism.

At the beginning of the session Forugh Monhi, whose three sons were martyred during the war, noted that Iranians are not alone and the U.S. should await their tough revenge.

“General Soleimani trained thousands of soldiers like himself. These soldiers will fight the enemies of Islam, the U.S. and Israel,” she added.

Afterwards, poets recited selections from their works about resistance and fight against the world arrogance.

Established by a number of Iranian revolutionary figures, the Ammar Popular Film Festival has been named after Ammar Yasir, a close companion of Prophet Muhammad (S).

The festival, which opened in Tehran on Wednesday, will come to an end on January 9.

“Leaving Neverland” accusers can pursue lawsuits against Michael Jackson’s companies

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Two men featured in a 2019 documentary alleging sexual abuse by Michael Jackson were given the go-ahead on Friday to pursue claims against two of the late singer's companies.

A California appeals court ruled that Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who appeared in “Leaving Neverland,” could pursue their claims because of a change in California law.

Robson and Safechuck say they were befriended by Jackson and were abused by him from the ages of 7 and 10 in the early 1990s.

Jackson died in 2009 but the singer's family has denied the claims and described “Leaving Neverland” as a “public lynching.” Jackson was acquitted at a 2005 trial in California on charges of molesting a different, 13-year-old, boy.

A lower court had dismissed lawsuits brought by the two, now adult, men because California's statute of limitations had required that claims of childhood sexual assault be filed before an accuser's 26th birthday. The revised law, which came into effect on Jan. 1, extends the period until an accuser's 40th birthday.

“We are pleased that the Court has recognized the strong protections California has put into place for sexual abuse victims under the state's new law extending the statute of limitations,” Vince Finaldi, the lawyer for the two men, said in a statement after the ruling by the Second Appellate District in the California Court of Appeals.

“We look forward to sharing the facts of the terrible abuse of James Safechuck and Wade Robson with a jury,” Finaldi added.

An attorney for Jackson's estate said he was confident that both lawsuits, against MJJ Productions and MJJ Ventures, would

be dismissed.

“The Court of Appeal's ruling merely revived lawsuits against Michael Jackson's companies, which absurdly claim that Michael's employees are somehow responsible for sexual abuse that never happened,” attorney Howard Weitzman said in a statement.

The appeal court said it was not ruling on the truth of the allegations by Robson and Safechuck but said they involved accusations of “a disturbing years-long pattern of child sexual abuse by international superstar Michael Jackson.”