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Farewell to Commander

#HardRevenge

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Iran will prove harsh revenge in practice: Shamkhani

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said on Monday that Iran will show harsh revenge for assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in practice.



He made the remarks on the sidelines of a funeral procession for Soleimani in Tehran.

Shamkhani noted that the massive participation of people at the ceremony shows that "the martyr's blood will not be forgotten".

Also in a meeting with Ali Mamlouk, a special security adviser to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, on Sunday, Shamkhani said, "Our response to this crime will definitely be military, however it will not be limited to military."

General Soleimani was assassinated in a United States' airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that Iran will take tough revenge on the criminals who killed the top Iranian general.

Araghchi: Trump will surely see consequences of his adventurism

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Abbas Araghchi said on Monday that President Donald Trump will see the negative consequences of his adventurism in the region, noting that the Iraqi parliament's vote to expel U.S. troops from the country is the beginning of the end of the U.S. in the Middle East.

Araghchi, who had participated in the funeral ceremony for IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Tehran, also said the U.S. threats against the Iranian people is not a new matter.

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

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was assassinated on Donald Trump's order.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU).

"Trump will see the consequences of his adventurism in the region. It started on Sunday after the Iraqi parliament voted on expel of U.S. forces from the country. This path will continue to complete exit of U.S. forces from the region. Even many Western countries believe that the unwise measure carried out by the U.S. can be considered as a beginning for termination of the American presence in the region," Araghchi underscored.

It is not advisable to keep silent towards U.S., government says

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Government spokesman Ali Rabiei said on Monday that from national security point of view, it is not advisable to keep silent towards the United States' malicious acts and statements against Iran.

"Iran has not given a proper response yet. In my opinion, what happened in Iraq's parliament yesterday was a proper response to the United States. From the national security point of view, we do not consider it appropriate to keep silent towards the United States," he said on the sidelines of the funeral procession for Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

Soleimani was assassinated in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

In an extraordinary session on Sunday, the Iraqi parliament voted for a resolution requiring the government to order the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

"There is no need for the presence of American forces after defeating Daesh," said Ammar al-Shibli, a lawmaker and member of the parliamentary legal committee.

"We have our own armed forces which are capable of protecting the country," he said, Reuters reported.

Around 5,000 U.S. troops remain in Iraq, most of them in an advisory capacity.

Iran summons German diplomat over 'destructive remarks'

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — The Iranian Foreign Ministry on Sunday summoned Germany's charge d'affaires to Iran over certain German officials' "unrealistic, inconsiderate and destructive" remarks about the U.S. terrorist action in assassinating Iranian military commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

"Martyr General Soleimani was hero of fighting terrorism at regional and international level. So, unilateral and unacceptable stances are contrary to cooperation between the two countries and also to regional peace, stability and security," the Foreign Ministry said.

The German charge d'affaires said he would immediately convey Iran's protest to Berlin.

Soleimani was assassinated in a United States' airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

According to Deutsche Welle, a German government spokeswoman, Ulrike Demmer, claimed that the U.S. strike that martyred Soleimani was a response to Iranian military provocations.

The Bild am Sonntag newspaper on Saturday quoted German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Chancellor Angela Merkel's would-be successor, as saying that the U.S. had acted alone in the assassination of the late Iranian commander, but claimed that General Soleimani was responsible "for exporting terror and violence, resulting in many deaths," Press TV reported.

By Syed Zafar Mehdi

TEHRAN - Spectacular scenes were witnessed in the packed streets of Tehran on Monday as millions came out to bid a tearful adieu to their beloved commander, Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and his comrades.

Eyes were moist and hearts were heavy as people marched in unison from Engelab Square to Azadi Square, two iconic landmarks of Tehran, with the caskets of martyrs draped in their national flags perched atop floral mini buses.

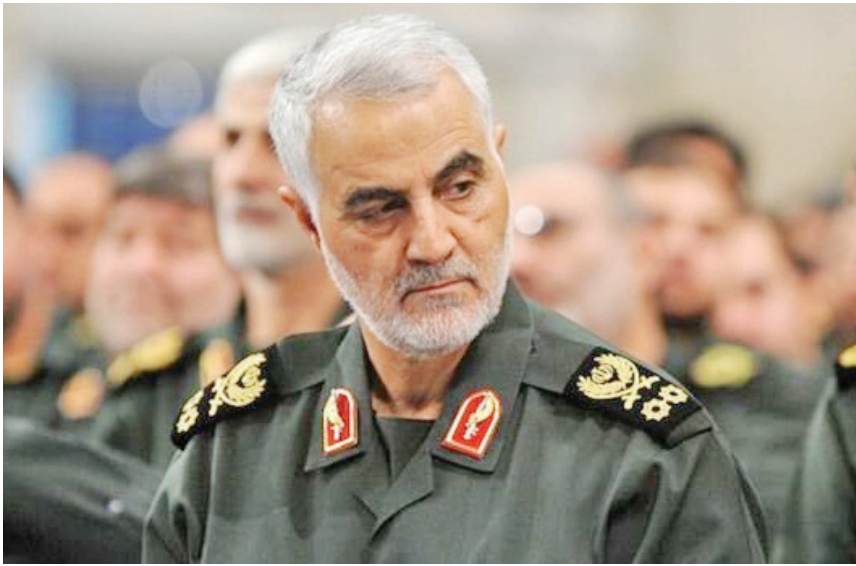
All the streets connecting to the Engelab-Azadi stretch were teeming with young and old mourners wearing black dresses and carrying posters and placards of Gen. Soleimani and his long-time aide Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, leader of Iraq's Hashd al-Shaabi.

Both of them played a pivotal role in the disgraceful defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. And both were killed by a rogue regime that has made common cause with groups like ISIS. To keep the pot boiling in the region, both need each other and people like Soleimani and Muhandis are their common enemies.

Millions of people who poured into the streets of Mashhad on Sunday and Tehran on Monday vowed to uphold the principles exemplified by these two revolutionary warriors. They pledged to continue the unfinished mission of the duo free the sacred land of Jerusalem from the illegal occupation of Zionists and offer prayers in Al-Aqsa Mosque.

Interestingly, it was the first time someone was honored with a multi-city funeral ceremony in Iran since the death of the architect of Islamic revolution Imam Khomeini. After funeral processions in the Iraqi cities of Kadhimiya, Najaf and Karbala, the martyrs were taken to Ahvaz, Mashhad and Tehran. On Tuesday, Gen. Soleimani will be buried at a local cemetery in his hometown Kerman.

Much has been said and written about the astounding popularity of Gen. Soleimani, also referred to as Haj Qassem, in Iran and the region. For Iranians, he was a national icon, a great symbol of resistance against the arrogant powers of the world, and a



loyal servant of the Islamic revolution.

For the world, he was a shadowy figure who plotted the downfall of ISIS in the region and miraculously escaped multiple assassination bids over the years. Top news magazines in the West featured him on their cover, marveling at his battlefield stratagems and political acumen. World's most notorious spy agencies had been gunning for him for decades, but he always walked with his head held high.

For resistance groups in the region, from Palestine to Iraq to Yemen to Syria to Lebanon and elsewhere, he was an irreplaceable asset. At his funeral on Monday, Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, described him as the martyr of Quds and termed his killing a brutal crime.

A day before, Hezbollah supremo Sayed Hasan Nasrallah paid glowing tributes to Haj Qassem and hailed his role in crushing ISIS in the region. In a fiery speech broadcast live, he warned that the U.S. would have to face its consequences.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Sayed Ali Khamenei, who shared a special relationship with the slain military commander, has already vowed hard revenge for this

dastardly act of war. Iran's top security body has also given its go-ahead.

Leading the funeral prayers on Monday morning at Tehran University, the Leader momentarily broke down and his voice choked with tears. Standing behind him in the first row were foreign dignitaries, top Iranian political and military officials and family members of Haj Qassem.

The Leader is known to maintain exemplary composure under most difficult situations but Haj Qassem was no ordinary man, no ordinary soldier. He was in a league of his own. He belonged to all the campaigners of truth and justice, all those who are resisting the hegemonic forces around the world.

As the Leader remarked, he had conquered the fear of death and wished martyrdom for himself. Whenever there was a mention of martyrs, tears would well up in his eyes. In one of his interviews, he says he envies his fellow soldiers who were martyred and then breaks down. He would ask everyone he met to pray that his ultimate fate is martyrdom. We are a nation of martyrdom, nation of Imam Hussain (as), he would say.

As the crowd of mourners marched towards Azadi Square today, the anger was evident. Amidst tears and sobs, there were vociferous slogans of revenge for the killing of Haj Qassem. Hey US, you started it, we will end it, read one of the posters, quoting words of the martyr. Hard revenge, was written on another poster, quoting words of the Leader. In between slogans of revenge and retaliation, there was a war-cry of sorts: until death, no humiliation.

Iranians took great pride in Haj Qassem the way Lebanese take pride in Hassan Nasrallah, both resistance leaders of repute. In the 34-day war between Hezbollah and Zionists in summer of 2006, Haj Qassem, on the instructions of the Leader, had played a key role in the defeat of Zionists. Both had been great comrades over the years and both had tremendous respect for each other. So, no surprise why the daughter of Haj Qassem asked her dear uncle to avenge the blood of her father.

On Monday, before the funeral prayers, she addressed the crowd with the eloquence and courage of her great father. The name of Haj Qassem is now shaking the nests of Zionism, Takfirism and the hegemonic powers, she said. Americans and Zionists should know that my father's martyrdom will make life a nightmare for them and shatter their spider houses.

Top Iranian political and military officials have also made strong statements over the past few days. Moderate and conservative politicians have closed ranks to form a common front against the enemies. Iran has finally walked out of the nuclear deal. Iraq has voted to expel U.S. forces from the country. Resistance groups in the region have renewed their pledge to confront Americans and Zionists. That's what Haj Qassem can do even after his death?

Everyone is waiting with bated breath for the vowed retaliation and it will be at the place and time of Iran's choosing. The blood of Haj Qassem has to be avenged. The tears of the Leader are precious. Those who brought tears to his eyes have to pay its heavy cost. That is the war cry loud and clear.

Zarif says Iran still committed to continue cooperation with IAEA

POLITICAL d e s k **TEHRAN** — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif announced via his official Twitter account on Sunday that Iran is still resolved to continue full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) even after taking the fifth and final step to put an end to its obligations under the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Iran's full cooperation w/IAEA will continue," Zarif tweeted.

Since May 8, Iran has been reducing its nuclear commitments with a series of steps every 60 days. In November, it gave Britain, France and Germany a third 60-day deadline to salvage the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or face a further decrease of commitments by Tehran. The deadline passed on Saturday.

In the statement on Sunday, the Iranian government announced that from now on the country will observe no limitations on its nuclear industry, including the level of uranium enrichment, the amount of enriched materials as well as research and development.

Zarif said the last step, which is also in accordance to the paragraph 36 of the JCPOA, Iran will see no "restriction on number of centrifuges" that it can operate.

"As 5th & final REMEDIAL step under paragraph 36 of JCPOA, there will no longer be any restriction on number of centrifuges," Zarif tweeted.

The chief diplomat reiterated Tehran's long-held position that if the remaining parties to the JCPOA take steps to offset sanctions on Iran, Tehran will reverse its decisions.

"This step is within JCPOA & all 5 steps are reversible upon EFFECTIVE implementation of reciprocal obligations," Zarif added.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on November 5 ordered the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to start injecting uranium gas into advanced IR-6 centrifuges at the Fordow nuclear enrichment facility. It was the fourth step by Iran to reduce its commitments to the JCPOA in response to the abrogation of the multinational nuclear deal by the Trump administration and return of sanctions coupled with inaction by the European Union, especially

its big trio (Germany, France, and Britain), to compensate sanctions on Iran.

On May 8, exactly one year after the U.S. abandoned the deal, Tehran said its "strategic patience" is over and began to partially reduce its commitments to the agreement at bi-monthly intervals.

In the first stage, Iran announced that it will not limit its stockpile of the nuclear fuel to 300 kilograms allowed under the deal. On that date (May 8) Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) said if the remaining parties to the JCPOA, especially Europeans, devise a mechanism to protect Iran from the sanctions' effect in the two-month deadline it will reverse its decision.

But since European parties missed the deadline, on July 7 Iran announced that it has started enriching uranium to a higher purity than the 3.67%, thereby starting the second step.

Again, as Europe missed the second 60-day deadline, Iran moved to take the third step, removing a ban on nuclear research and development (R&D).

Human Rights Watch: Trump threatens war crimes against Iran

By staff and agency

Human Rights Watch said on Sunday that U.S. President Donald Trump's public threat to attack Iranian sites of cultural importance would be war crimes if carried out.

"President Trump should publicly reverse his threats against Iran's cultural property and make clear that he will not authorize nor order war crimes," said Andrea Prasow, acting Washington director at Human Rights Watch, according to website of the Human Rights Watch.

"The U.S. Defense Department should publicly reaffirm its commitment to abide by the laws of war and comply only with lawful military orders," she said.

The laws of war prohibit deliberate attacks on civilian objects not being used for military purposes. Objects of great importance to a people's cultural heritage must not be the object of attack. Article 53 of Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions specifically prohibits any acts of hostility against cultural objects, including making

such objects the target of reprisals. The U.S. Law of War Manual (2016), which has extensive provisions relating to the protection of cultural property, incorporates this provision into U.S. law. The U.S. is also a party to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), which similarly prohibits such attacks.

In a tweet on Saturday, Trump threatened to target 52 Iranian sites, including cultural and civilian ones.

The tweet came after assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on Friday.

Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Markus Leitner, whose country represents the United States' interests in Iran, was summoned to the Foreign Ministry on Sunday over Trump's remarks.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif condemned Trump's threats, reminding him that attack on cultural sites is an instance of "war crime".

China: Iran was 'forced' to abandon remaining JCPOA commitments

By staff and agency

China said on Monday it believes Iran was "forced" to reduce its commitment to the 2015 nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Chia also said the "recent military adventures by the U.S. violated the basic norms governing international relations."

Iran on Sunday abandoned the remaining limits of the agreement in response to the U.S. airstrike that killed its top military commander.

According to the Associated Press, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang added that "there is no way out by military means, and extreme pressure will not work."

He said, "Power politics is unpopular and unsustainable."

China is among the countries that signed the nuclear deal. The spokesman asserted that Iran has demonstrated restraint under the agreement and "did not violate its obligations."

In its fifth and final step in reducing commitments, Iran issued a statement on Sunday announcing suspension of all limits under the JCPOA.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran no longer faces limitations on capacity of enrichment, purity of enrichment, amount of enriched material and research and development," the statement said.



The statement added that Iran will continue cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It is noted in the statement that Iran will reverse its decision once the sanctions are removed and the country enjoys the benefits of the nuclear deal.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel issued a joint statement on Sunday urging Iran to reverse its decision.

"We specifically call on Iran to refrain from further

violent action or proliferation, and urge Iran to reverse all measures inconsistent with the JCPOA (the Iran nuclear deal)," the statement said, according to AP.

Elsewhere in the statement, the three European countries have called for all sides to work towards an urgent easing of tension in the Persian Gulf.

"We call on all parties to exercise utmost restraint and responsibility. The current cycle of violence in Iraq must be stopped," the joint statement said.

"We recall our attachment to the sovereignty and security of Iraq. Another crisis risks jeopardizing years of efforts to stabilize Iraq."

"We also reaffirm our commitment to continue the fight against Daesh (Islamic State), which remains a high priority. The preservation of the Coalition is key in this regard. We therefore urge the Iraqi authorities to continue providing the Coalition all the necessary support," the statement added.

"We stand ready to continue our engagement with all sides in order to contribute to defuse tensions and restore stability to the region."

Tehran's decision to further scale back its commitments followed the United States' assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' Quds Force in Baghdad on Friday.

Zarif asks Trump: Have you ever seen such a “sea of humanity?”

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Pointing to the participation of millions of mourners in the funeral procession for Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday asked the U.S. president that if he had ever seen such a “sea of humanity”.

The unbelievably massive funeral processions in Iraq and Iraq followed the assassination of top Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. airstrike at Baghdad’s international airport on Friday morning.

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

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was killed on Trump’s order.

“Have you EVER seen such a sea of humanity in your life, @realdonaldtrump?” Zarif tweeted.

“Do you still want to listen to the clowns advising you on our region? And do you still imagine you can break the will of this great



nation & its people?” the chief diplomat asked.

Zarif also emphasized, “End of malign U.S. presence in West Asia has begun.”

On Sunday, millions of angry mourners from all walks of life participated in

separate funeral ceremonies held in the southwestern city of Ahvaz and the north-eastern city of Mashhad.

The funeral processions to honor the IRGC Quds Force chief first started in the

city of Ahvaz early on Sunday, hours after his remains arrived from Iraq.

On Sunday afternoon, hundreds of thousands of people attended the mourning procession for the general in the shrine city of Mashhad.

People, including the young, old, men, and women, flocked to the city of Mashhad from different cities of Khorassan Razavi province to bid farewell to Soleimani, who has been called “the General of the Hearts”.

On Saturday, similar huge funeral ceremonies were held in the Iraqi cities of Kadimiya, Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf for General Soleimani and al-Muhandis. Iraqi dignitaries including Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi participated in the funeral procession in Baghdad.

On Monday morning, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei performed the Islamic funeral prayer for Lieutenant-General Qassem Soleimani and his martyred companions at the University of Tehran.

Millions of Tehraners participated in the funeral ceremony for the assassinated general.

Fox News host criticizes Trump for risking war with Iran

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Fox News host Tucker Carlson has criticized U.S. President Donald Trump for the assassination of Iran’s IRGC Quds Force Chief Qassem Soleimani for a potential war that may result from it.

Speaking on Fox News on Friday night, Carlson said “it’s no exaggeration” to suggest that by the time his show is next on the air the U.S. will be involved in a conflict with Iran.

He criticized the “chest-beaters” who praised the killing of General Soleimani without thinking of the ramifications.

Carlson’s commentary stood out on a network of outspoken advocates of Trump’s decision.

“From Iran’s perspective, we’re already there. If Iranian forces killed the chairman of our joint chiefs of staff, for example, would you consider it an act of war?” Carlson added.

He criticized former national security adviser John Bolton and Sen. Ben Sasse as two of those who have praised the assassination.

In a tweet on Friday, Bolton said how he hoped this will result in “the first step to regime change in Tehran.”

“Congratulations to all involved in eliminating Qassem Soleimani. Long in the making, this was a decisive blow against Iran’s malign Quds Force activities worldwide. Hope this is the first step to regime change in Tehran,” Bolton tweeted.

This is while Trump has publicly denied the decision was intended to implement a regime change in Iran.

Carlson accused the Trump administration of ignoring other questions posed by the American people.

“Is Iran really the greatest threat we face? And who’s actually benefiting from this? And why are we continuing

to ignore the decline of our own country in favor of jumping into another quagmire from which there is no obvious exit? If we’re still in Afghanistan 19 years later, what makes us think there’s a quick way out of Iran?”

“Before we enter into a single new war, there’s a criterion that ought to be met: Our leaders should be required to explain how that conflict will make the United States richer and more secure,” Carlson said.

“In every single place, each of these conflicts has turned out to be longer, bloodier, and more expensive than we were promised in the first place. The benefits? Often they’ve been non-existent.”

Meanwhile, Iran has vowed to take a “tough revenge” for assassination of General Soleimani, who was a major figure in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

Abe calls for diplomatic efforts to ease tension in Middle East

By staff and agency

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has called on all parties involved to exhaust diplomatic efforts to ease tension in the Middle East.

“A further escalation of the situation should be avoided and I ask all parties involved to exhaust diplomatic efforts to ease tensions,” The Japan Times quoted him as saying in a press conference on Monday.

“With heightened tensions in the Middle East, I’m deeply concerned about the current situation,” he said.

Abe’s remarks came amid a recent spike in tension after assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on Friday.

Tokyo and Tehran have maintained diplomatic ties for decades.

Abe visited Tehran in June 2019 to deescalate tension between Iran and the U.S. which spiked after Donald Trump withdrew his country from the multilateral 2015 nuclear



deal and slapped the harshest ever sanctions on Tehran. He met with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani.

Abe later met Rouhani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2019 and also in December when Rouhani visited Japan.

Japan had decided not to join a U.S.-led coalition patrolling waterways in the Persian Gulf region, however, plans to send Self-Defense Forces personnel and assets to the region.

— without success — over how to withdraw from both countries.

What is lacking today from the Trump administration’s policy is any sign of a regional strategy for dealing with Iran and the growing American isolation in the Middle East. Now that this war is underway, how do he and his generals plan to fight and prevail against Iran? What are the political and military goals and objectives of American policy? How does this war end?

I cannot imagine how Trump can now achieve his avowed goal of withdrawing from endless wars in the Middle East. A far more likely scenario is that the U.S. military will ask for additional forces in the region to defend existing troops on the ground and to respond to future attacks.

From the beginning, the Trump strategy in the region has been naive and incompetent.

The plan to bring Iran back to the negotiation table is in tatters. The primary U.S. ally in the region, Saudi Arabia, is led by a murderous tyrant who is fighting a brutal and indecisive war in Yemen with American help. Given Trump’s hostility toward traditional allies in Europe and the general Muslim hostility toward American policy in the Middle East, the U.S. has virtually no possibility of international help in the region.

It is noteworthy that no significant Iraqi security forces showed up to defend the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad until the Shiite militants withdrew from the area.

Meanwhile, Turkey pays little attention to Washington and cooperates with Russia to expand its influence in Syria. Refugees from the wars in Syria and Iraq continue to present a significant international crisis as they build up in Turkey and the region.

Today, Trump is trapped in a situation that Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon would well understand: Does the United States now fight and go deeper into the Middle East or withdraw under Iranian pressure? Given the foreign affairs and national security incompetence of this president, his disregard for professional knowledge and experience and his impulsive decisionmaking process, I have no confidence that this administration can handle the war they stimulated when they withdrew from the nuclear deal with Iran.

Trump is a symbol of ignorance, says Soleimani’s daughter

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Zeinab Soleimani, the daughter of General Qassem Soleimani, on Monday called Donald Trump a “symbol of ignorance”, who ordered the assassination of his father.

Addressing millions of people who had crowded the streets of Tehran to mourn the martyrdom of his father, she said, “Mr. Trump, the gambler! Families of American soldiers must spend their days waiting for their deaths and corpses.”

She added, “Trump, the gambler! Your vicious plots to divide Iran and Iraq have created a historic bond between the two nations.”

Zeinab Soleimani added the United States and Israel faced a “dark day.”

“You crazy Trump, the symbol of ignorance, the slave of Zionists, don’t think that the killing of my father will finish everything,” Soleimani said.

She further said, “My father was the greatest man in the strategy of calculating the power and behavior of the enemy.”

“Qassem Soleimani’s name now shakes



Zionism, Takfiris, and hegemony,” she noted.

“The United States should know that Ashura is the source for Mujahideen and liberation power and terrifies the enemies of Islam and humanity,” she concluded.

Millions of people chanting “Death to America” crowded the streets of Tehran on Monday as Iran mourned the martyrdom of General Soleimani, whose funeral was held in the capital Tehran.

“God the almighty has promised to get his revenge, and God is the main avenger,” vowed Esmail Ghaani, the general who will take over the IRGC Quds Force.

“Certainly, actions will be taken,” he added.

Soleimani assassination ‘was an act of war’: ex-U.S. army intelligence officer

In a commentary posted on The Hill website on January 4, a former U.S. Army intelligence officer wrote that the United States is “waist deep and sinking in the Middle East.”

The comments by James Pardew came one day after the United States assassinated top Iranian military commander General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on January 3.

Pardew, who also served as deputy assistant secretary-general of NATO, said what the U.S. did “was an act of war”.

Following is the text of his article.

The question of war with Iran is now settled. With President Donald Trump’s decision to authorize the U.S. military to execute Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iranian forces throughout the Middle East, the United States is at war with Iran, whether the White House acknowledges it or not. It’s the equivalent of Iran killing the commander of U.S. Central Command.

Without a doubt, Iran will respond to the execution of Soleimani with deadly force. The question will be where and when?

The military attack that killed Soleimani are acts of war that make the nature of the relationship no longer an issue. This war is not — and is unlikely to be in the future — a conventional war as American political and military authorities would prefer. It will continue to be internationally political, unconventional and asymmetric.

In Iraq alone, the Trump administration will be fighting this war in a vulnerable position with 5,000 isolated American troops on the ground, supported by air and naval power in the region, and an embassy fortress in Baghdad surrounded by Iranian and other enemies. But that vulnerability does not mean the war will be centered in Baghdad.

Today, the U.S. is at war with a capable and difficult adversary that has options to attack Americans and U.S. interests in unexpected ways around the world. The United States is not tiptoeing into a Middle Eastern quagmire. It is waist deep and sinking.

The American entanglement in Iraq did not begin with Donald Trump, although he has made it significantly worse. In a historically catastrophic decision, the George W. Bush administration used a false rationale that Saddam Hussein

had weapons of mass destruction to invade Iraq in 2003. With this misguided adventure — promoted by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Richard Cheney as unfinished business from the first Persian Gulf War — the U.S. immediately became bogged down in Iraq.

In giving military priority to the invasion and occupation of Iraq after the 2001 attacks on the United States, the Bush team neglected requirements in Afghanistan — where the 9/11 attacks were actually planned. The result was ongoing security disasters not only in Afghanistan but across the Middle East.

Later, the overconfident Bush team was shocked that pro-Iran Iraqis won U.S.-sponsored elections; it apparently failed to recognize that the population of Iraq was between 60-70 percent Shiite Muslim and therefore inclined to support Iranian interests.

As a NATO official in 2007, I traveled to Baghdad when NATO agreed to help train Iraqi security forces. After landing at the airport, we flew in a helicopter in an evasive maneuver at treetop level to the Green Zone, a gigantic fortress in Baghdad where the U.S. activities were most concentrated. Likewise, in my last visit to Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2008, security required that Americans and NATO officials also fly the mile or two from the civilian airport to the NATO secure area in the capital. The security of road travel in both cities could not be guaranteed following years of military and economic assistance.

Freedom of movement is the most critical factor in evaluating success in any conflict area. From my experience in Vietnam and elsewhere, the U.S. was losing badly in both Iraq and Afghanistan by 2008.

Since 2008, incoming U.S. administrations have struggled

James Pardew says assassination of Gen. Soleimani is “the equivalent of Iran killing the commander of U.S. Central Command”.

Soleimani martyrdom won’t derail Resistance Front: Ismail Haniyeh

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh has said the assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani will not change the path of the Resistance Front and that resistance will continue in Palestine.

“I declare that the resistance project in Palestine will continue and will not be weakened and it won’t retreat,” Haniyeh said in a speech at the funeral of General Soleimani in Tehran on Monday morning, Mehr reported.

The Palestinian leader lauded the late Iranian commander as a martyr of al-Quds who made great sacrifices in order to safeguard Palestine and the resistance movement.

General Soleimani’s efforts helped strengthen the resistance and enhanced its power, he said.

“We have come here today to express our sincere and genuine feelings for the dear brother and the martyred commander,” Haniyeh added.

He also offered his condolences to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as well as the Iranian government and nation over the loss of Soleimani.

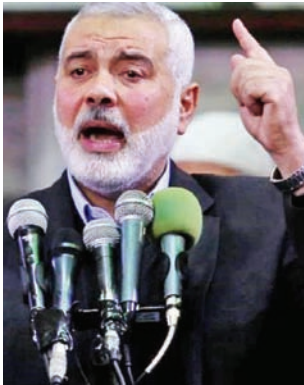
“We announce that this cruel crime committed by the Americans signifies the criminal spirit that has led to crimes in the holy land of Palestine.”

Ayatollah Khamenei led the ritual “prayer for the deceased” during the funeral of General Soleimani in Tehran on Monday. Millions of Iranians along with high-ranking officials of Iran and the Resistance Movement participated in the event.

General Soleimani, the deputy head of Iraq’s Hashd al-Sha’abi, and a number of their entourage were assassinated 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 Donald Trump.

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.



Turkey: Soleimani killing poses ‘serious risk’ to regional peace

POLITICAL **TEHRAN** — Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Monday that the United States’ assassination of Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani poses a “serious risk” to peace in the region.

“The killing of Soleimani is a serious risk for peace in the region,” Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara on Monday, Press TV reported.

“We will work with other countries to reduce tensions between the U.S. and Iran,” Cavusoglu said.



He said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had held phone conversations with President Hassan Rouhani as well as his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron, Iraqi counterpart Barham Salih and Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani about the assassination.

The Turkish minister noted that Erdogan will also discuss the latest developments with Russian President Vladimir Putin during his visit to Turkey on Wednesday.

“Mr. President and Putin will address these issues personally. We all have a common concern that Iraq should not turn into a conflict zone for other countries,” he said.

Speaking in an interview with broadcaster CNN Turk on Sunday, Erdogan said he believed “killing the most senior commander of a country will not remain unanswered.”

He noted that he was surprised by the assassination because it occurred just hours after a phone call with U.S. President Donald Trump during which he “especially had suggested that tensions with Iran should not be heightened.”

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

According to the Pentagon, General Soleimani was assassinated on Donald Trump’s order.

The U.S. airstrike also martyred Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU). Iran has vowed to take a “tough revenge” for Soleimani’s blood.

On Saturday, Trump claimed that his military would hit “very important” targets, including cultural heritage sites, if the Iranians want to take a retaliatory action against the assassination of General Soleimani.

“We have ... targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level & important to Iran,” said Trump in a tweet while making a reference to the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 during which 52 Americans were taken hostage.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Sunday responded to Trump, saying, “Through MILLENNIA of history, barbarians have come and ravaged our cities, razed our monuments and burnt our libraries.”

However, Zarif said, “Where are they now? We’re still here, & standing tall.”

STOCK MARKET

TEDPIX	365815.5
IFX	4742.9

Sources: tse.ir, Ifb.ir

CURRENCIES

USD	42,000 rials
EUR	46,882 rials
GBP	54,946 rials
AED	11,437 rials

Source: cbi.ir

COMMODITIES

Brent	\$69.71/b
WTI	\$63.89/b
OPEC Basket	\$67.15/b
Gold	\$1,578.20/oz
Silver	\$18.48/oz
Platinum	\$989.75/oz

Sources: oilprice.com, Moneymetals.com

Gold hits 7-year high as Iran tensions spark fresh market jitters

The price of gold rose to its highest level in nearly seven years on Monday as tension in the Middle East fueled demand for safe places to warehouse cash.

Investors moved into assets seen as havens as they awaited any Iranian response to the U.S. killing of a senior Iranian commander, sending the Japanese yen higher and extending a sell-off in global stock markets.

Gold rose as much as 2.3 percent to \$1,580 a troy ounce, its highest level since April 2013, boosting the share prices of producers in the UK and South Africa. Harmony Gold climbed 3 percent, while London-listed Polyus International advanced 1 percent.

Crude oil prices hit a three-month high as they rose 2 percent to nudge above \$70 a barrel, their highest level since an attack on a Saudi oil facility last year. Brent has climbed more than 5 percent since U.S. air strikes on Friday.

European and Asian equity markets fell, with the composite Stoxx Europe 600 down 1.1 percent in morning trading. Japan's Nikkei was the worst major performer as it fell 1.9 percent after coming back online following the holiday season, its steepest one-day drop since early October. S&P 500 futures deepened their declines through the day, as they pointed to falls of 0.6 percent when Wall Street opens. The Cboe's volatility index, or Vix, rose 1.8 points to 15.86, but was still below its long term average of roughly 20.



Relations between Washington and Tehran soured further over the weekend as Donald Trump warned Iran would be hit "harder than they have ever been hit before" if the country retaliates to the killing of Qassem Soleimani. In a series of increasingly bellicose tweets, the president said he would respond "perhaps in a disproportionate manner" if Iran hits American targets.

"We're left waiting to see if we get an aggressive response from Iran with the whole Middle East likely feeling vulnerable," said Deutsche Bank strategist Jim Reid.

Tehran said it would not abide by any of its commitments to the 2015 nuclear accord following the killing of its top commander, as hundreds of thousands of Iranians gathered in Iran's holiest city to mourn Soleimani.

President Donald Trump also threatened neighboring Iraq with sanctions "like they've never seen before" if it expels American troops in retaliation for the assassination in Baghdad on Friday.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs and UBS both said gold was likely to be a better bet for investors than oil if geopolitical tensions worsen. "We believe that the current risk premium embedded in Brent prices is already elevated, with an actual supply disruption now necessary to sustain oil prices," said Jeffrey Currie, global head of commodities research at Goldman Sachs "In contrast, history shows that under most outcomes gold will probably rally to well beyond current levels." Over the past month, gold has risen by more than \$100 an ounce, helped by a lower U.S. dollar and increased demand from investors.

A weaker dollar is a positive for gold because it makes the metal cheaper for buyers holding other currencies. Gold-backed exchange traded funds added more than 48,000 ounces to their holdings on Friday, taking purchases so far in 2020 to almost 173,000 ounces. The total amount of gold owned by ETFs now stands at a two-month high of 81.6m ounces, according to Bloomberg.

The currencies of oil importing countries including India and South Korea also suffered, offering "a stark reminder of the vulnerability of Asian currencies to higher oil prices given that Asia in general is a net oil importer," Commerzbank's currency analysts said in a note to clients.

(Source: Financial Times)

NIOPDC inks MOU for renovation of oil products transport fleet

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — National desks Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC) signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with an Iranian bank and a domestic manufacturer of oil products storages for renovation of its transportation fleet.

As reported by IRI, the MOU was signed with Tejarat Bank and Mammut Industrial Group on Sunday in Tehran.

The signing ceremony was attended by NIOPDC's Managing Director Amir

Vakilzadeh, Tejarat Bank's Managing Director Reza Dolatabadi and Mammut Industrial Group's Managing Director Mehrzad Ferdous.

According to the managing director of Tejarat Bank, in the first phase of the project, the bank is going to provide two trillion rials (about \$47.6 million) for the renovation of the NIOPDC's fleet.

"The interest rate of the facilities is 12 percent and NIOPDC is obliged to pay the loan back over a four-year period,"



NIOPDC's Managing Director Amir Vakilzadeh (L), Tejarat Bank's Managing Director Reza Dolatabadi (M), and Mammut Industrial Group's Managing Director Mehrzad Ferdous exchanging signed MOU documents on Sunday in Tehran.

Dolatabadi said.

Vakilzadeh for his part, underlined the need for renovation of the country's oil products transport fleet and said: "one of the major goals of this agreement is to increase the safety of the fleet and will undoubtedly

bring great benefits for the owners of the vehicles, and NIOPDC as well."

Established in 1928, NIOPDC has been responsible for the supply and distribution of oil products across the country for over 80 years.

‘Adapting to new technologies a prerequisite for improving businesses’

By Ebrahim Fallahi

TEHRAN — The secretary of Iran's 3rd National Conference on Improvement and Rebuilding of Organizations and Businesses says improving the business environment in the country is impossible using the traditional ways, because in the era of the "fourth industrial revolution" we are witnessing tremendous developments in technology and businesses and organizations must adapt to these changes.

Speaking in the seminar's press conference on Sunday, Ahmad Jafarnejad, who is a professor at the Tehran University's faculty of management, said currently, the businesses and organizations in the country are not in a very good condition due to a lack of proper management and policy-making based on scientific ideas.

"We need an integrated system to benefit from the knowledge provided by our scientific institutions and the world's new technologies in order to improve the management style in our businesses and organizations," Jafarnejad said.

Referring to the conference, the university professor said: This national conference is characterized by being scientific and utilizing the experience of business executives.



Also speaking in the press conference, a former deputy at the State Administrative and Recruitment Organization Ahmad Tabatabaie said the government needs to put more importance and significance on the private sector in order for the country's businesses and organizations to go through a positive reconstruction process.

Mentioning the significant developments in the country's defense and military organizations, Tabatabaie said if the government pays the same attention to other sectors like

Customs office at Tehran Fairgrounds facilitates trade for foreign exhibitors

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Managing desks director of Iran International Exhibitions Company said that setting up a customs office at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds has facilitated trade exchange for the foreign exhibitors, IRNA reported.

Bahman Hosseinzadeh also said it is a privilege led to more presence of foreigners in the Iranian exhibitions and bringing more foreign currency for the country.

"The specialized exhibitions we have held over the past two years have played some fruitful part in boosting production and also exports to the neighboring countries", the official underscored and stressed that development of presence in the neighboring countries and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will help Iran's promotion of exports a lot.

In late September 2019, Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) opened a representative office at Tehran Permanent International Fairgrounds in order to facilitate custom operations for exhibitors and participants of international exhibitions in the country.

The office is aimed to facilitate customs services and commodity clearance for the exhibitors.

According to Iran's deputy industry minister in trade affairs, Hossein Modares



Khiabani, the office is going to operate only for clearing commodities which are going to be exhibited in events or are needed for international exhibitions.

Iran International Exhibition Company holds about 90 exhibitions annually, according to the managing director of the company.

"The [representative] office has been launched in accordance with the existing customs conventions in order to encourage the presence of foreign companies in these exhibitions and their cooperation with Iranian companies," Hosseinzadeh said at the time of opening the office.

"The office provides important services to companies intending to import technology into Iran, and in the face of the U.S. sanctions this step can have a significant impact on developing the country's industry," he added.

MOUs worth \$119m signed to indigenize steel industry

ECONOMY **TEHRAN** — Memorandums of understanding worth five trillion rials (about \$119 million) have been signed on indigenizing equipment and technology in steel industry of the country in the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21, 2019), the head of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO) announced.

Making the remarks in a meeting with the board members of Iranian Steel Producers Association on Sunday, Khodadad Gharibpour said promotion of indigenizing is one of the major orders of the country's senior officials and in this due the steel producing companies should focus more on indigenizing and supplying their requirements through domestic production, IRNA reported.

In the past year some of the steel producers were facing problems for supply of raw materials, the official said adding that through cooperation with the state-run sector and related companies IMIDRO managed to remove their problems.

The official has previously announced that the annual production of crude steel in Iran is planned to rise three million tons to 28 million tons in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 19, 2020).

Such progress in this sector is mainly the

result of "indigenizing" approach, which is seriously followed up in all industrial sectors of the country.

In fact, indigenizing the technology of manufacturing required products, equipment and machinery to attain self-reliance is the major economic approach of the country during the sanctions.

Industry, Mining and Trade Minister Reza Rahmani has said that the country has achieved a proper self-reliance in steel sector.

"This industry can be still developed and regarding the huge investment made in this sector during the past years, we will soon observe a good balance also in production chain of this metal in the country", the minister has emphasized.

"Steel industry is one of the industries in which some good investment has been made and today it has become a production advantage", Rahmani further underscored.

Indigenizing technology in steel sector today shields this sector from the sanctions, so it is atop agenda for the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade and its subsidiaries.

As IMIDRO head has said, "Today, we are witnessing a national will and determination for self-reliance and promotion of production and indigenizing should be in fact considered as a necessity in this regard".

Dynamics and prospects for the world economy

The global economy

The decade just ending was the longest period without a slump in the major economies since 1945, but it also involved the weakest recovery. In 2019, global growth was at its slowest since the global financial crisis of 2008. What factors led to the slowdown and what enabled the major capitalist economies to avoid a major slump?

The slow annual GDP growth of 1-2% is due to low investment rates. As a recent IMF report notes, "firms turned cautious on long-range spending and global purchases of machinery and equipment decelerated."

Trade conflicts were also an important factor in the slowdown in technology spending. Global trade — in durable final goods and components — simply slowed to a standstill.

Since 2009, globalization and free trade increasingly has given way to protectionist measures, as in the 1930s. Governments worldwide introduced 2,723 new trade distortions, affecting an estimated 40% of world trade by November 2019.

Emerging economies suffered most. In most cases, growth has been far lower in the last six years than in the same period before the Great Recession in the 1930's. In Argentina, Brazil, Russia, South Africa and Ukraine, for example, there has been no growth at all.

In 2018, many central banks placed a hold on their policy interest rates or, in the case of the Federal Reserve, actually hiked the rate. In 2019, the opposite was the case as monetary authorities reversed their stance that the global economy had been "normalized."

Interest rates on government bonds and other "safe assets" fell back towards zero or even turned negative. With borrowing so cheap, large corporations and banks sucked up cheap credit; not to invest in productive assets, but to buy up shares and bonds.

The main purchasers of corporate stocks are the corporations themselves. These so-called buybacks pushed up stock prices, making it easier to buy out other companies or get more credit. Much of the buyback funds were borrowed. This expansion of what Marx called "fictitious capital" has replaced investment in productive capital, and it has been financed by issuing more debt to fund the cost of servicing existing debt.

The major capitalist economies are now living in a fantasy world where the stock and bond markets insist world capitalism has never had it so good, while the real economy is stagnating in terms of output, trade, profits and investment.

The other factor enabling the capitalist



economies to avoid a new slump was the rise in employment and the fall in the jobless rate. Instead of investing heavily in new technology and shedding labor, companies took in more cheap labor generated by the recession and immigration. According to the International Labor Organization, the global unemployment rate dropped to just 5%, its lowest level in almost 40 years.

Reducing their costs

In the 2010s, it seems that companies, rather than reducing their costs in the face of recession and low profitability by sacking workers and introducing labor-saving technology, opted to take on labor at low wages and with "precarious" conditions (no pensions, zero hours guaranteed under temporary contracts etc.)

High employment and low real GDP growth

means low productivity growth, which over time means stagnating economies — a vicious circle. The predicted AI/robot revolution in industry has yet to materialize. Globally, the annual growth in output per worker has been hovering around 2% for the past few years, compared with an annual average rate of 2.9% between 2000 and 2007.

These factors may have delayed the advent of a new slump. The fundamental driver of a capitalist economy is profit. However, neither the average profitability of capital nor the amassing of profit is rising in the major economies. According to the latest data on the net return on capital provided by the EU's AMECO database, profitability in 2020 will be 4% lower than the peak of 2017 in Europe; 8% down in Japan; and flat in the United States.

The growing profitability crisis threatens to turn the increased credit for corporations from a bonus into a burden. The Institute of International Finance estimates that global debt has now hit \$250 trillion, nearly \$32,500 for every person on Earth.

The World Bank (WB) joined the Bank for International Settlements in warning that the largest and fastest rise in global debt in half a century could lead to another financial crisis as the world economy slows.

(Source: hellenicshippingnews.com)

NIDC indigenizes technology for manufacturing ELC

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Researchers at the National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) successfully completed a project for designing and manufacturing of Extended Life Coolant (ELC) which is a super air/oil cooler material used in industrial and transportation engines, Tasnim reported on Monday.

According to Asghar Sadeq-Abadi, the chief of commodity and machinery engineering at NIDC's Engineering Management Department, ELC can be used in a variety of engines including Caterpillar, DEUTZ, OEM and etc.

"Due to its high heat transferring capacity, this material increases the efficiency of the engine," Sadeq-Abadi said.

In the ELC super cooling formulation, new Nano anti-corrosion and anti-fouling inhibitors are used to increase the life of the motors, according to the official.

Following the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions and the problems caused by high volatility and rising exchange rates in the country's currency market, Iran's oil ministry was faced with some problems regarding the supply of necessary



equipment in the oil industry, so it applied new strategies to focus more on domestic production.

In this regard, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and its subsidiaries have been

signing deals with capable domestic companies for manufacturing all kinds of oil industry equipment, including down hole tools and equipment, pumps, types of drill bits, all kinds of control and safety valves, and accessory equipment, as well as various pipe types, explosion-proof electro motors, turbines, compressors, alloy steels, drilling measuring tools, and etc.

Last month, chairman of the board of directors of Iranian Association of Manufacturers of Oil Industry Equipment said nearly 85 percent of the country's oil industry equipment are produced based on indigenized knowledge and technology.

The official noted that Iran has also a capacity to export over \$5 billion worth of oil industry equipment and knowledge every year and the government should invest on such a great potential.

Earlier in August 2019, NIOC announced that many of the company's contracts with domestic manufacturers of oil industry equipment had reached over 70 percent of physical progress.

Renewables prevent consuming 1.3bcm of natural gas in Iran

E N E R G Y **TEHRAN** — Director 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 renewable power plants have so far prevented the consumption of 1.3 billion cubic meters of natural gas in thermal power plants.

Electricity generation from renewables in the country has also led to economizing on the consumption of water by over one billion cubic meters, IRNA reported on Sunday, quoting Reza Samadi as saying.

Using of renewable energy sources will also reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and this will significantly reduce air and land

pollutioning, Samadi said.

According to the official, the country's total power generation capacity currently stands at 85 gigawatts (GW), only 840 megawatts of which is produced by renewable power plants.

In late December 2019, SATBA reported that renewable sources prevented the emission of Green House Gases (GHG) in Iran by 3,048 tons during the first nine months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 22-December 21).

Based on the report, Electricity generation from renewables in the mentioned period also prevented the consumption of 1.263 billion cubic meters of fossil fuels in the country.

As reported, currently, 377 MW capacity of

renewable power plants are under construction across the country and the installed capacity of such power plants has reached 849 MW.

The data also indicates that so far, 118 MW capacity of large-scale power plants are installed in the country and another 37 MW are under construction.

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 coun-



try 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.

Oil hits \$70 a barrel as Iran, Trump trade threats

Oil prices rose a further 2% on Monday, pushing Brent above \$70 a barrel, as rhetoric from the United States, Iran and Iraq fanned tensions in the Middle East after a U.S. air strike which killed a top Iranian military commander.

Brent crude futures LCOct soared to a high of \$70.74 a barrel and was at \$69.74 at 0940 GMT, up \$1.14, or 1.66%, from Friday's settlement.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate CLc1 crude was at \$63.92 a barrel, up 87 cents, or 1.38%, after touching \$64.72, the highest since April.

The gains extended Friday's more than 3% surge after a U.S. air strike in Iraq killed Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani on Friday, heightening concerns about an escalation in conflict in the Middle East and the possible impact on oil supplies.

The region accounts for nearly half of the world's oil production, while a fifth of the world's oil shipments pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to impose sanctions on Iraq, the second-largest producer among the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), if U.S. troops were forced to withdraw from the country.

Baghdad earlier called on U.S. and other foreign troops to leave Iraq.

Trump also said that the United States would retaliate against Iran if Tehran were to strike back after the killing.

The "situation brings lots of uncertainty and geopolitical tea-leaf reading on reactions. While the closure of the Strait of Hormuz remains a very unlikely event, the deterioration in Iraq bears supply risks," said Norbert Rucker, head of economics at Swiss bank Julius Baer.

"Geopolitics tend to be a temporary force on oil markets and we believe this time is no different. We raise our near-term forecast to \$65 per barrel, and maintain a neutral view."

Goldman Sachs analysts said the current risk premium embedded in Brent monthly price spreads is already elevated and an actual supply disruption is now necessary to sustain current oil prices.

The "precedent set by the Abqaiq attack (on Saudi oil facilities in September 2019) showed that the oil market has significant supply flexibility starting when Brent is at \$70 a barrel, even before shale production needs to ramp up, suggesting only moderate upside from here, should an attack on oil assets actually occur," the bank said.

(Source: reuters.com)

Transatlantic business event set to unite global energy hubs

Two of the world's leading energy industry locations will collaborate on a unique event which will take place in Aberdeen for the eighth consecutive year in March.

Hosted by Granite PR, the annual Aberdeen-Houston Gateway has become a much-anticipated fixture on the business calendar, annually generating interest from both sides of the Atlantic.

In 2020, the event will be held in association with the Greater Houston Partnership and G-Tech Innovation Centre. As two of the founder members of the World Energy Cities Partnership, Aberdeen and Houston have a long relationship which will be explored. One highlight will be the March 31 flagship Scottish showcase lunch at Aberdeen's Norwood Hall Hotel, a session which regularly draws an audience in excess of 120.

Commenting on plans for the 2020 Aberdeen-Houston Gateway, Jeffrey Blair, senior director, Europe, Middle East and Africa, at the Greater Houston Partnership, said:

The "relationship between Houston and Aberdeen goes back decades.

"For me, it goes back to 2014 with my first visit. For my work at the Greater Houston Partnership, the annual Aberdeen-Houston Gateway event provides

me the perfect balance of reconnecting with people from the region as well as meeting new ones.

"My key message over the years is based around: What's happening now in Houston and what has changed since last year? This prepares Scottish delegates for attending OTC.

"Three years ago, a technology showcase was added and last year the program expanded to include Dundee as well.

The "Gateway event keeps evolving – it is my premier networking event in the UK and it is an excellent event for any company or person, Aberdonian or Houstonian, wishing to learn more about each other's country, region, city or business."

Andy Grieve, of G-Tech Innovation Centre added: "I wish there had been something like Aberdeen-Houston Gateway before we made the move in 2005.

"Accessing a ready-made network and learning from someone else's mistakes is always cheaper and faster.

"We established G-Tech Innovation Centre to offer a low-risk industrial business space springboard into the Houston market so businesses can hit the ground running while climbing the learning curve of locating into this market."

(Source: energyvoice.com)

China's move to clean energy is driving natural gas demand

China is seeing significant growth in demand for natural gas as the government encourages the switch away from coal to cleaner energy. The country is already in the second year of a new three-year action plan for cleaner air, under which targets have been set for reducing emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides and increasing the proportion of days with good air quality to 80 percent annually.

In order to achieve this goal, the government is encouraging the generation sector to switch from using coal to natural gas, particularly for domestic heating, with the aim of having the natural gas account for 10 percent of energy consumption by 2020.

Unsurprisingly, this policy goal is driving significant growth in natural gas demand. Gas consumption in China is expected to reach 310 billion cubic meters in 2019, a 10 percent increase on the previous year, according to the National Energy Administration.

Demand from China is expected to continue increasing going forward, although at a slightly reduced rate due to slowing economic growth, with the International Energy Agency (IEA) penciling in average annual growth in natural gas consumption of 8 percent between now and 2024. It predicts this increase in demand will be mainly driven by the ongoing switch from coal to gas for residential use.

Increasing use of natural gas

China is not the only country increasing its use of natural gas. Global demand is expected to rise by more than 10 percent over the coming five years to reach more than 4.3 trillion cubic meters in 2024, according to IEA.

Much of this rise in consumption will come from fast-grow-



ing Asian economies, with the region accounting for nearly 60 percent of the total projected demand increase between now and 2024. China alone is expected to account for 40 percent of the global rise.

China is currently the world's second-largest buyer of liquid natural gas (LNG), which is more cost-effective to transport over long distances. It is expected to overtake Japan to become the largest LNG buyer in 2020, while it is already the largest gas importer in terms of both LNG and pipeline gas.

Demand from India is also increasing, particularly for LNG, with the country's LNG imports up 8.1 percent on the previous year during the five months to the end of August at 13.49 million metric standard cubic meters, as it too looks to switch to more environmentally-friendly fuels. Even so, it still remains some way off Japan's imports of 35.7 million metric tons in the six months to September 2019.

On the supply side, China is set to become the world's

fourth-largest producer of natural gas by 2023, based on annual production growth of 5.5 percent. It is also predicted to be one of the two largest contributors to natural gas supply growth between now and 2024, after the U.S., with the two countries collectively accounting for more than 50 percent of total production increase, according to the IEA.

Growing domestic demands

But even with this growth in production, China's natural gas output, which reached 114.1 billion cubic meters in the first eight months of 2019, a 9.3 percent year-on-year rise, is not expected to be enough to keep pace with growing domestic needs.

As a result, the IEA expects natural gas exports to become further concentrated between the United States, Australia, and Russia.

The growing demand for natural gas is likely to put upward pressure on prices. The fact that China lacks adequate gas storage capacity is also likely to contribute to price volatility, particularly due to the seasonal nature of natural gas demand for heating.

On October 14, CME Group launched the first physically-delivered LNG futures contract, which is aimed at helping market participants across the globe manage LNG price risk.

China currently has around 10 billion cubic meters of storage space, the equivalent of only around 4 percent of its annual consumption. By contrast, Germany and Italy, two other countries with high natural gas import dependency, have storage capacity equivalent to 25 percent and 33 percent respectively of their annual consumption.

(Source: finance.yahoo.com)

Oil analysts bet on modest price gains in 2020 as supply shrinks, says Reuters poll

Oil prices are likely to hover around \$63 a barrel in 2020, a Reuters poll showed, benefiting from deeper production cuts by OPEC and its allies, and hopes that a U.S.-China trade deal could jumpstart economic growth.

Benchmark Brent crude is forecast to average \$63.07 per barrel in 2020, up marginally from last month's \$62.50 estimate, a survey of 38 economists and analysts showed.

Brent prices have gained about 24% in 2019 so far, continuing its modest recovery on the back of supply cuts by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies like Russia.

The group earlier this month agreed to deepen supply cuts from 1.2 million barrels per day (mbpd) to 1.7 mbpd for the first quarter of 2020.

"Together with our expectation of slowing U.S. supply growth, we think that OPEC's decision to deepen production cuts will tip the oil market into a deficit early next year," said Alexander Kozul-Wright from Capital Economics.



The International Energy Agency (IEA) sees total U.S. oil production growth slipping to 1.1 mbpd in 2020 from 1.6 mbpd this year.

The rate of U.S. output growth has been declining as producers reduced the number of oil rigs operating for a fourth quarter in a row for the first time since 1999.

U.S. WTI crude futures are forecast to average \$57.70 a barrel next year, up from last month's forecast of \$57.30.

Demand is projected to grow by 0.9-1.4 mbpd in 2020 as signs of detente in the U.S.-China trade war gave a glimmer of optimism for the ailing global economy.

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) new regulations favoring low-sulphur fuel oil effective Jan. 1, 2020 will be another dominant factor driving demand growth next year, analysts noted.

The "global growth rebound story should do wonders for oil prices in the first half of the year. Oversupply concerns will remain, but a pickup in demand will alleviate strong increases in production from Norway, Brazil and Guyana," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA.

While most respondents are optimistic about oil prices in the near term, none of the analysts polled expect benchmark Brent prices to rise above the 2019 high of \$75.60 hit in April.

The "big question on the supply side is: Will OPEC really stick to the latest deal and cut production as the level of OPEC output already is very low," said LBBW analyst Frank Schallenberg.

OPEC and its producer allies have been capping their collective output since 2017 and Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Friday said the OPEC+ nations might consider ending their oil output curbs in 2020.

(Source: hellenicsshippingnews.com)

Energy transition: Renewables in India's electric future

India today is witnessing an energy trajectory that straddles multiple imperatives: Sustainability, energy access for 1.35 billion people and energy self-sufficiency while establishing and sustaining viable economic growth. In response, the economy has embraced renewable energy at a scale and pace unprecedented in its history. Led by solar energy, the country has already reached the halfway mark of its 175-gigawatt (GW) installed renewable capacity goal.

A sustainable energy future also entails a switch to electricity, the cleanest fuel at point of use.

While renewables excel in generating clean electricity for consumer use (e.g. household electricity), economy-wide electrification, i.e. the decarbonisation of industry at large, poses another challenge.

Therefore, while electrification and renewables are the twin imperatives of a sustainable energy future, the question is whether they can deliver the certainty that India's socio-economic growth needs.

When the sun doesn't shine or the wind doesn't blow, power generation can come to a halt. This intermittency allows for coal to have a sustained role as a baseload source of power.

While the government aims to achieve as much as 350 GW to 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030, coal will remain the major fuel source for electricity generation in India. The diminishing role of coal, achieved by exploiting the commercial attractiveness of solar energy is being witnessed nationally.

According to a research report released in November 2019 by KPMG in India, renewables intermittency — the primary hindrance of renewables — is being globally addressed through a variety of technologies and business models.

A combination of conventional generators, balancing through the power markets and battery storage have begun to prove their merit. In the last year alone, Germany, Portugal, and Denmark were powered by a significant volume of renewables — almost 100 percent for some time periods.

A renewable energy scenario

A 100 percent renewable energy scenario is possible for India as well, according to a special issue on storage published for the 11th International Renewable Energy Storage Conference (IRES 2017) in Düsseldorf, Germany.

Using an hourly resolved simulation model, the report's author posits that 100 percent renewable energy penetration is possible in India, subject to low-cost support of batteries.

Furthermore, KPMG in India, in a modelling exercise conducted for states leading in renewable generation, also confirmed that renewable energy penetration of 30 percent to 40 percent, in energy terms, is eminently possible by 2025.

Synchronously operated, India's electricity grid enables the resilience and flexibility that renewable energy will need.

Moreover, making renewable penetration mainstream will also necessitate storage requirements (battery, pumped hydro, other alternative forms.)

The prices of battery storage, a vital lever in the energy transition are anticipated to decline. This builds a strong case to promote battery storage through a policy push.

(Source: energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com)

The dire consequences of Trump’s Suleimani decision

One thing is clear after the killing of Iran’s second most important official: Americans are not safer.

By Susan Rice

Americans would be wise to brace for war with Iran.

Full-scale conflict is not a certainty, but the probability is higher than at any point in decades. Despite President Trump’s oft-professed desire to avoid war with Iran and withdraw from military entanglements in the Middle East, his decision to order the killing of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, Iran’s second most important official, as well as Iraqi leaders of an Iranian-backed militia, now locks our two countries in a dangerous escalatory cycle that will likely lead to wider warfare.

How did we get here? What are the consequences of these targeted killings? Can we avoid a worse-case scenario?



A U.S. Army paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne Division preparing to leave Fort Bragg, N.C., on Wednesday.Credit... Jonathan Drake/Reuters

The escalatory cycle began in May 2018, when President Trump recklessly ignored the advice of his national security team and the opposition of our allies in unilaterally withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal — despite Iran’s full adherence to its terms and its efficacy in rolling back Iran’s nuclear program. Since then, the Trump administration has had no coherent strategy to constrain Iran’s program or to counter other aspects of its nefarious behavior.

Mr. Trump’s “maximum pressure campaign” to impose ever more debilitating economic sanctions did not force Iran to capitulate; instead, predictably, it induced Tehran to lash out with a series of increasingly bold military provocations against Sunni Arab and Western targets while restarting important aspects of its nuclear program. Iran’s destabilizing activities in the region, notably in Syria, Yemen and Lebanon, have only intensified. At the same time, it has conducted a brutal crackdown on its civilian population. None of the Trump administration’s stated objectives have been met; if anything, the United States’ security and strategic positions in the region have weakened.

In deciding to eliminate General Suleimani, Mr. Trump and his team argue they were acting in self-defense to thwart imminent attacks on Americans in Iraq and the region. Unfortunately, it’s hard to place confidence in the representations of an administration that lies almost daily about matters large and small and, even in this critical instance, failed to brief, much less consult, bipartisan leaders in Congress.

Second, even if the killing of General Suleimani is justified by self-defense, it doesn’t make it strategically wise. Given the demonstrably haphazard and shortsighted nature of the Trump administration’s national security decision-making process (including calling off strikes against Iran 10 minutes before impact, inviting the Taliban to Camp David and abandoning the Kurds), it’s doubtful the administration spent much time gaming out the second and third order consequences of their action or preparing to protect American military and diplomatic personnel in the region.

To assess the fallout of killing General Suleimani, we must understand that the Iranian regime cannot survive internal dissent or sustain its powerful position in the region if it backs down from this provocation. For Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a strong response is essential. For the United States, the question is: What form will it take and how quickly will it come? One thing is clear: Americans are not safer, as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo argued on Fox News the morning after. Rather, American citizens are at greater risk of attack across a far wider battlefield than before.

Start with Iraq. The State Department has warned American citizens not to travel there. Iranian-backed militias have attacked United States and allied installations, and can continue to do so around the country. The government in Baghdad has declared the killing a violation of the terms of the American military presence in Iraq. We will face mounting pressure to withdraw our military and diplomatic personnel from the country. If we leave, the United States will suffer a major strategic defeat: Iran will justifiably claim victory, and the gains of the fight against ISIS will be lost as the terrorist group rebuilds.

There is no hope now to revive, much less strengthen, the Iran nuclear deal, and we must expect Iran will accelerate its efforts to revive its nuclear program without constraint.

The global economy is imperiled, as the Gulf States’ energy infrastructure faces the risk of an Iranian attack, and commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and the larger Gulf region is threatened.

United States military, diplomatic and commercial operations as well as civilian targets throughout the Middle East are in range of both Iranian missiles and terrorist cells. From Afghanistan and Europe to Africa and Latin America, Iranian proxies — once latent — can stage asymmetric attacks against American and allied targets without warning. Even in the United States, we have reason to fear that terrorist sleeper cells could be activated. Worse, we face these threats now substantially alone, as the Trump administration apparently neglected to consult or even warn our key allies and partners about the impending risks to their interests that result from killing General Suleimani.

In the face of Iranian reprisals, it will be difficult for the United States to de-escalate tensions and avoid a larger conflict. Iran gets the next move. The United States has failed to deter Tehran thus far, even with the deployment of 14,000 additional American troops to the Gulf region since May. The announcement this week that the Pentagon was sending 3,500 more soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division seems unlikely to change things.

When Iran does respond, its response will likely be multifaceted and occur at unpredictable times and in multiple places. President Trump will then face what may yet be the most consequential national security decision of his presidency. If he reacts with additional force, the risk is great that the confrontation will spiral into a wider military conflict. If he fails to react in kind, he will likely invite escalating Iranian aggression.

It’s hard to envision how this ends short of war.

Ms. Rice, a contributing opinion writer, was the national security adviser from 2013 to 2017.

(Source: New York Times)

Some reactions to Soleimani’s assassination

More reasons for American troops to feel welcome and safe?

By Salman Parviz

The assassination of revered General Qassem Soleimani this Friday can be described best with shot-first-ask-questions-later attitude.

It is hard to place confidence in U.S. President Donald Trump, who lies almost daily about matters large and small. His short-sighted nature on decisions regarding national security (including call off strikes against Iran 10 minutes before impact, invite the Taliban to Camp David, abandoning the Kurds, buddying up with Kim Jung-un, are to name a few).

Soleimani, 62, headed Iran’s elite Quds Force, and was tasked with protecting and boosting Iran’s influence in the Middle East.

The escalatory cycle began in May 2018, when Trump recklessly ignored the advice of his national security team and the opposition of allies in unilaterally withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal — despite Iran’s full adherence to its terms and its efficacy in rolling back Iran nuclear program.

Trump’s “Maximum Pressure” campaign has made life hard for the general population, soaring the cost of living due to which we saw protests scattered all over the country recently.

However, the assassination of General Soleimani has once again united the country and even bought sympathies from the Iraqi nation which was evident from the hundreds of thousands of mourners in his funeral in several Iraqi cities.

Monday’s procession was held in Tehran and General Soleimani will be finally laid to rest in his hometown of Kerman.

UPDATE OF EVENTS:

■ Two days after the assassination of General Soleimani, Iraqi parliament voted to ask the U.S. government to end an agreement to host 5,200 U.S. troops still stationed in Iraq. The move would oust all foreign boots from Iraqi soil. Trump has threatened sanctions. Iran’s foreign ministry has maintained that the new U.S. sanctions are a sign of its bullying approach.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Mass expressed his concerns over the increasing tensions in the Middle East, but also reiterated that the Iraqi government’s position must be respected.

The move is non-binding, but it is likely to be heeded by the Prime Minister Abdul-Mahdi who slammed U.S. attack and informed parliament that Soleimani was due to meet with him the day he was martyred and deliver a response from the Iranians to a Saudi message that could have led to a de-escalation of tensions, reports Reuters.



Among those there was Esmail Ghaani, the new head of Quds. (Reuters)

■ Iraq Parliament Speaker, Mohammed al-Halbousi, denounces U.S. strike as “breach of Iraqi sovereignty”.

■ The popular Iraqi Shi’ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadar, who heads the largest bloc in Iraqi parliament, has called for more substantial response to the killing. He called the Iraqi parliament bill “a weak response, insufficient against American violation of Iraqi sovereignty and regional escalation.”

■ Iraqi officials have summoned the U.S. envoy to Iraq, Mathew Tueller, over the strikes.

■ Iraq’s National Security Council denounced the U.S. assassination late on Friday.

■ Last Sunday, three blasts appeared to be mortars or rockets that landed inside the heavily fortified Geen Zone, home of the U.S. Embassy and a number of other foreign embassy. No casualties were reported.

■ The U.S. has failed to deter Tehran thus far, even with the deployment of 14,000 additional American troops in the Persian Gulf region since May. The announcement this week that the Pentagon was sending 3,500 more soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East.

■ Britain warns nationals against travel to Iraq and Iran.

Europe powerless as Trump takes on Iran

By Alasdair Lane

As American missiles screamed down from the skies above Baghdad airport on Friday, European hopes for peace in the Middle East took a similar trajectory. In killing General Qasem Soleimani, President Trump has stepped perilously into the unknown, inviting Iranian retribution upon the U.S. and her allies. Whether revenge will be sought militarily, we do not know; but decisive diplomatic action is inevitable.

Even before the attack, the West’s headline agreement with Iran—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—hung by a thread. Brokered by President Obama, the accord curbed Tehran’s nuclear weapons program in return for massive sanctions relief. It was heralded by many as a historic breakthrough—but for Donald Trump, JCPOA represented the “worst deal in history”. In May 2018, he announced America’s unilateral withdrawal.

Co-signatories of the pact, E.U. leaders have long viewed it as a means to maintain Middle Eastern peace. When Trump pulled out and slapped sanctions on Iran—who had been abiding by the deal’s conditions—they reacted with mutual horror. In desperation, Europe has sought to sustain the agreement until November’s presidential election, when—perhaps—they may see a more sympathetic candidate take over.

Europe’s biggest hitters—France, Germany, the U.K.—each share America’s concerns on Iranian belligerence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a spree of near-identical tweets. He hoped, presumably, to showcase a united front; but in



On Saturday Iranians take part in a mourning rally at Phalestine Square in honor of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the elite Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike on Baghdad airport late Thursday. (Photo by Saeid Zareian/picture alliance via Getty Images)

reality, little more was achieved than the clear suggestion that only now were Washington’s allies being notified of the attack.

This lack of pre-warning reflects the mid-Atlantic rift on Middle Eastern policy. Europe wants rapprochement with Iran, recognizing its role in preserving regional stability. America, conversely, sees in Tehran a grievous geopolitical threat, and wishes to diminish its power wherever possible.

On Saturday, despite Washington’s best efforts, the divide boiled over in public. Speaking on live radio, France’s European affairs minister declared that

“we have woken up to a more dangerous world”. The mask slipping, Pompeo shot back on CNN: “Yeah, well, the French are just wrong about that.”

But whichever way you cut it, the world is now more dangerous—in the short term at least. State-ordered assassinations don’t easily square with a rules-based international system, giving Iran license in its response. Regardless of their nationality, NATO troops across the Middle East will be in Tehran’s crosshair. Civilians, too, are in danger—America, unsurprisingly, has ordered citizens to leave Iraq, as has

the Netherlands, with France and the U.K. warning against regional travel.

The incident has also given rise to worries that Iraq might vote to expel its U.S. troop contingent. Though relatively few in number, the 5,000 strong deployment has helped keep a resurgent Islamic State contained. At its height, the self-proclaimed caliphate brought terror to European streets—E.U. leaders would be justified in contesting any action that facilitates the group’s return.

But Soleimani’s killing has exposed the weakness of Europe’s voice. Had they been consulted in advance of the hit, would the famously intransigent Donald Trump have reconsidered? Almost certainly not. Neither would the hard-line Tehran establishment which, emboldened by the attack, heads buoyantly into February’s Iranian election. With both sides digging in, Europe’s ability to act as a buffer is set to diminish further.

That, perhaps, is the continent’s fate: to be the impotent onlooker watching fearfully as the pair lurch towards war. In that scenario, an unenviable decision would have to be made—align closer with America as Iran seeks nuclear ascendancy, or strive continually for conciliation.

Conflict is not yet inevitable, though. Now Trump has flexed his muscles, he might be more open to dialogue; assuming, of course, that Iran’s retaliation remains proportionate. But with “severe revenge” promised, the threat of unchecked escalation hangs heavy. From the sidelines Europe will appeal for peace, wondering evermore if anyone is listening.

(Source: Forbes)

Trump threatens Iraq with sanctions if U.S. troops are expelled

■ What did Trump threaten Iraq with?

Speaking from the presidential plane, Trump said that if Iraq asked U.S. forces to depart on an unfriendly basis, “we will charge them sanctions like they’ve never seen before, ever. It’ll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame.”

Some 5,000 U.S. soldiers are in Iraq as part of the international coalition against the Islamic State (IS) group.

On Sunday, the coalition paused its operations against IS in Iraq, and Iraqi MPs passed a non-binding resolution calling for foreign troops to leave.

The resolution was pushed through by the parliament’s Shia Muslim bloc - which is close to Iran.

(Source: BBC)



Donald Trump has threatened Iraq with “sanctions like they’ve never seen before” (Photo:AFP)

Why America can't live without wars!?

By Quayyum Raja

KASHMIR — The assassination of the most famous Iranian General Sardar Qassem Soleimani has saddened and shocked the people in all parts of divided Jammu Kashmir to such an extent that I have made an investigation as to why America can't live without wars. My findings are based on reports in various publications including the Times of India referred to the google. These reports are backed by my information obtained qualitatively.

The former American Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in Obama administration and Secretary of State John Kerry are both former army officers, who participated in wars in the past. They describe America as a country made for wars, not for peace. Up until 1947, American Department of Defense was called as the Department of War. By one account, America fought 70 wars since its birth. American economy is described by its own leaders as a "WAR ECONOMY." American leaders claim they like wars and that they are good at it. They admit that "we are not good at anything else. We can not build a decent car or television; can not give good education to kids or health care to the old, but we can bomb the shit out of any country." Similar sentiments have been echoed more recently. "American economy is a war economy. Not a manufacturing economy. Not an agricultural economy. Not a service economy. Not even a consumer economy." Business Pundit Paul Farrell wrote this during Iraq war: "Deep inside we love war. We want war. Need it. Relish it. Thrive on war. War is in our genes, deep in our DNA. War excites our economy, our brain. War drives our entrepreneurial spirit. War thrills the American soul. Oh just admit it. We have a Love Affair with War."



My qualitative discoveries are based on my direct interactions with western political activists and intellectuals. When I went to Europe at the age of 17 in 1979, my concentration was on my education and self-sufficiency. My mind was fresh not much politics written on it as yet. Therefore, the western press and politics began to influence me. The West led by America against another power such as Soviet Union, claimed that the west was a free world and Soviet Union was like a prison, where people lacked a freedom of choice and freedom of self-expression. The West also claimed that the Muslims and Christians believed in one God, while the Communists had no god at all. America used several Muslim states against Soviet Union and at the same time demonized Islam. America supported all oppressive Muslim regimes against their own Muslim masses. Such

American contradictions began to raise so many questions in my mind and stopped my earlier positive impression of Western democracy and American claim of its so called "Free World." These confusions and contradictions increased my interest in politics in general and intellectual debates in particular. One day, I met with a western political activist, who said the next war would also be started by America. I was astonished, because until then, I heard many people in Europe speaking against the Soviet Union, but hardly anyone speaking against America. I asked the gentleman why he thought the next war would be caused by America and he laughed and said because the previous two world wars were also caused by us. The Soviet Union simply contained the war. He said that America wanted a political and economic hegemony and that would be the cause of another war.

That was about 40 years ago. Now, the history of 40 years proves all that and much more.

Now, the main question for me and I am sure it would be the same for anyone LOVING THE HUMANITY, is, as to why someone should use power negatively? What would be the impact if the power America has is used positively and benignly? I am sure it would have a positive result. I was a young man when I was falsely accused of involvement in the killing of an Indian diplomat Ravinder Mhatre on 5th February 1984. He had been kidnapped by a group of Kashmiris in Birmingham, UK, in order to protect the life of the Father of the Kashmir Independence Movement, Maqbool Butt. I was mistreated by the British government and sentenced by the Home Minister rather than a judge. I fought both judicially and politically against the politically motivated incarceration and finally won my freedom after 22 years. Thanks to the European Court of Human rights and countless people from all social and political backgrounds, who campaigned for my release? The treatment meted out to me and my people in Jammu Kashmir has not made me bitter, but more humane and committed to the cause of justice for all and everyone everywhere. I do not believe the American leaders claiming that the war is in their genes. It is the environment they have created. They are Pavlovian and Behaviourists, who have conducted experiments on dogs, rats and cats to learn how to control human beings, but I would only suggest human methods to deal with humanity such as empathy, compassion, tolerance and mutual respect. Otherwise, the balance of political power is must to contain war which what the Americans say is in their "genes." The cost will be too high, while the humanity deserves peace and prosperity through co-existence!

Gen. Soleimani's message to Trump: I am alive & more powerful

By Hanieh Sadat Jafari

TEHRAN (MNA) – Haj Qassem Soleimani and his comrade Mahdi al-Muhandis were assassinated by an airstrike directly ordered by the U.S. President Trump in Baghdad, three days ago.

Keeping in mid the simultaneity of assassination of the two major figures, let's see what Trump is picking up just few days after his naive decision.

First, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, previously called simply as 'Haj Qassem', is now 'Martyr Soleimani'. The second title is much more prominent, popular and in consequence more powerful and effective.

Haj Qassem, as the commander of Quds Force for over 20 years, was playing his major role out of Iran's borders. Common people in Iran know him for his participation in the 8-year-old imposed war with Iraq besides his undeniable and great role in fighting and uprooting the ISIL in recent years. He is also admired for his simple life style.

The point is Haj Qassem, well-known among his comrades for his kindness, humbleness and braveness, was not interested in making interviews or showing off his achievements. His reputation is to be definitely ever-increasing after his martyrdom. The hero will become a legend. A legend with its own specific culture which will expand and cannot be assassinated.

In Iran, Haj Qassem's martyrdom,



despite the recent unrest and draconian U.S. sanctions and tough economic conditions, reshuffled the nation to stand side by side announcing hatred for Trump's anti-Iranian policies and more for himself. The 'unprecedented' funeral ceremonies of the great Iranian soldier and his comrades held in various cities across the country. Millions of people flooded mourning into streets for Haj Qassem's sake, which proved Iranians' anger towards enemies besides their loyalty and thankfulness for the ones who serve the nation and seek to preserve Iran's dignity.

In his funeral processions, flags of Iran,

Iraq, Hashd Al-Shaabi and Lebanon's Hizballah could be seen hoisted, which can be translated into a new era for the region. Martyrdom of Haj Qassem, regathered all the regional elements and requirements of the resistance axis. It created a new wave of resistance in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and etc., which is more anti-U.S. than before. The wave regards Americans as main source of regional insecurity and is decisive to expel them.

Sunday's Iraqi Parliament's ratification, Hassan Nasrallah's remarks and the fifth step of Iran in reducing JCPOA obligations go hand in hand transmitting a big message

to the U.S. and its allies.

Martyr Soleimani has been on U.S. streets after his assassination. Anti-war protesters rallied in several American states, New York, Washington and etc., opposing Trump's measure and his decision to send thousands more troops to the Middle East.

People showed respect to Martyr Soleimani in various cities across the world, too.

International experts have warned of ISIL return after assassination of Lit. Gen. Soleimani, while they condemn the US measure as a terrorist act which can be sued legally in international courts.

For sure, Trump has undermined the consequences of his decision for assassination of Lit. General Soleimani. The U.S. President had blacklisted Haj Qassem as a terrorist, someone similar to Bin Laden and Al-Baqdadi, which he never was.

Trump had no image of what Haj Qassem can do even after his martyrdom. Trump has immaturely ignited a fire which can entrap the U.S. in a predicament in the Middle East. The issue, besides his other wrongmongering policies, have brought the U.S. into a disrepute.

The U.S. President considered Haj Qassem as an individual but "when you break a huge mirror it changes into million pieces with the same quality," this is the big lesson for the U.S. Now, it must wait for the #HardRevenge.

Widespread media coverage of funeral procession of Lt. Gen. Soleimani

By Zahra Mirzafarjouyan

TEHRAN (MNA) – Millions of people have poured onto the streets in Tehran to pay tribute to the martyred Iranian top commander, Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani who was assassinated by the U.S. terrorist forces in Baghdad on Friday.

The U.S. terrorist forces assassinated Lt. General Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq's pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) in an airstrike ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump at Baghdad's international airport early on Friday.

General Qassem Soleimani was hailed as a charismatic brave hero in Iran and beloved by the troops. He devoted his life to defend Iran's national interest in the region so he is considered as a national hero for Iranian people regardless of their different political and religious tendencies.



After holding massive funeral processions in West southern city of Ahvaz and East northern city of Mashhad, the bodies of the martyred commander and his Iranian companions arrived in Tehran Monday morning where millions of Iranians have packed the streets of the capital to bid farewell to the Iranian anti-terror commander.

A group of foreign ambassadors to Iran along with high-ranking officials of Iran and Resistance movement had also participated in the event.

The funeral procession in Tehran has received widespread media coverage.

'Aljazeera' alongside other Arab language media, covered the live event. It also prepared a report, titled 'A sea of mourners in Tehran as calls for revenge over Soleimani assassination grow' covering the whole event.

While broadcasting live footage of the event, 'Russia Today' described the unprecedented presence of Iranian people at the funeral procession of IRGC top commander as "extensive".

Vali Nasr, Advisor to former U.S. President Barak Obama in a tweet wrote, "Looking at size of the crowds at #Soleimani funeral this is a watershed moment for the Middle East."

Journalist of New York Times Farnaz Fassihi mentioned in her Twitter account to the funeral procession, describing, "Millions are out. Sea of endless people by 6 am. In 25 years covering Iran, have never seen anything like this."

"I have also covered plenty of rallies in #Iran where crowd is bused in. It never gets bigger than tens of thousands. This is millions. This is not coerced," she added.

'Sky News' also covered the event by referring to the message of Lt. Gen. Soleimani's daughter to Donald Trump which was broadcasted live on Iranian television.

'Time of Israel' described this event as the largest processions in Iran since the 1989 funeral for the Islamic Republic founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

'Reports said these were the largest processions in the country since the 1989 funeral for Islamic Republic founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini,' Time of Israel reported.

'BBC' and 'Reuters' also covered the funeral procession of Iranian commander by reporting the presence of huge crowds in Tehran streets and Gen. Soleimani's daughter address to Trump.

"People cried while others clutched pictures of the late commander. Mourners passed his coffin over their heads and "death to America" chants were heard, BBC said.

"His daughter Zeinab Soleimani warned the U.S. it faces a "dark day" for the killing. "Crazy Trump, don't think that everything is over with my father's martyrdom," she said," it added.

'Euro News' called the event as huge funeral processions for Iran's Soleimani.

"Huge crowds have gathered in the centre of Tehran on the second day of funeral processions on Monday. The day before, mourners, spreading across several kilometres, chanted slogans anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans against a background of funeral songs broadcast over loudspeakers."

What is the next step of revenge?

By Payman Yazdani

TEHRAN —The war against ISIS with the pivotal role of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani gained some important victories in Iraq and Syria, but it is all too clear that the threat posed by violent extremism and terrorism sponsored by Saudi Arabia will continue and grow in spite of such victories.

Some of the nondemocratic reactionary kingdoms of the Persian Gulf region particularly the Saudi Arabia in order to survive after Islamic Awakening (Arab Spring) have been following destructive regional policies that not only is devastating the region and inflicting heavy damages to the interest of people of the region but also threatening the security and stability of the neighboring regions such as Europe.

Another strategy which these nondemocratic states have taken to guarantee their survival is following the U.S. and the Israeli regime's policy in the region in order to pave the way for the disintegration of the region in line with the U.S. "Greater Middle East" plan. In fact, reactionary regimes such as Saudi Arabia and UAE are key tools and puppets in the hands of the U.S. and



Israel which are sponsoring the U.S.-orchestrated regional plots financially and ideologically.

Everybody is aware of the Saudi and Some other reactionary Arab states' destructive measures in the region especially against Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and other states in the Middle East and Africa. Saudi Arabia and UAE have been aiding ISIL and other terrorist separatist groups in northern Syrian and Iraq.

Definitely the assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq who

challenged the U.S. plots for the region and devoted his life to combating U.S. and Saudi created terrorist groups in the region has been assassinated with the intelligence cooperation of these reactionary regimes.

The assassination of Soleimani is a clear violation of international law and norms because he was targeted in the soil of the sovereign state of Iraq in a terrorist attack not in the battlefield and above all, he was an Iranian official recognized by Iran's constitution.

Following the criminal act of the U.S., Iran's Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed "hard revenge awaiting the U.S." Iranian security and military officials later announced that the revenge will be "tough but not hasty and not limited to military one".

According to what Iranian officials vowed the first step of revenge became operational last night when the Iraqi parliament passed the bill obligating the country's government to expel U.S. troops from Iraq.

I think in the next step to curtail the continuation of the U.S. and Israeli plots in the region, their regional mercenaries and proxies particularly Saudi Arabia should pay the price and be targeted.

Second Announcement



N.I.S.O.C

NATIONAL IRANIAN SOUTH OILFIELDS COMPANY AHVAZ-IRAN

TENDER NO. : 01-31-9350181

National Iranian South Oilfields Company(NISOC) intends to purchase the following goods

items	Material Description	Quantity
3	P/F "SOLAR" CENTRIFUGAL GAS COMPRESSOR MODEL: C1687-2533 & C1688-2562 REF. SOLAR DIVISION	1040

Vendors who intend to participate in aforesaid tenders are requested to send their "Intention to participate" letter via Fax to the following number along with their resume according to Qualitative Assessment Form no. 2, available at: WWW.nisoc.ir , not later than 14 days after the second announcement, otherwise, their requests for participation in the .tender will be disregarded

The applicants should have relevant background in supplying the required goods and capability to provide and submit .a bid bond of 32,414 EURO or 4,062,700,000 RIAL, in favor of NISOC
Tender documents including the materials thorough technical specifications and Qualitative Assessment Forms can be accessed via: WWW.nisoc.ir-material procurement management tab
ONLY ACCEPTABLE DELIVERY TERM IS D.D.P. NISOC'S WAREHOUSE, AGHAJARI,IRAN PAYMENT TERM IS C.O.D. SUBSEQUENT TO NISOC' S MATERIAL APPROVAL NO ADVANCE PAYMENT WILL BE PAID

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تهران تایمز : نوبت اول ۹۸/۱/۱۴ نوبت دوم ۹۸/۱/۱۷

Iran bids farewell to war hero Qassem Soleimani

Pictured below are Iranian people attending a funeral procession that began in Ahvaz on Saturday to bid farewell to their national hero Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in Iraq in a U.S. airstrike last Friday. The procession continued in Mashhad, Tehran and Qom as he will be buried in his hometown Kerman today.



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Machu Picchu rubbish crisis threatens UNESCO heritage site

Tourists leave behind more than five tonnes of rubbish every day. Millions of tourists visit Peru's Machu Picchu citadel each year.



It is a World Heritage Site and it is increasingly under threat. Tourists leave behind more than five tonnes of rubbish every day. In response, municipal authorities are trying to turn the area into the country's first eco-friendly zone.

Machu Picchu stands 2,430 m above sea-level, in the middle of a tropical mountain forest, in an extraordinarily beautiful setting. It was probably the most amazing urban creation of the Inca Empire at its height; its giant walls, terraces and ramps seem as if they have been cut naturally in the continuous rock escarpments.

(Source: Aljazeera)

Wake up & smell the coffee: Italy wants UNESCO protection for espresso

Two years ago, Italy was successful in having Naples' very own iconic food recognized as part of the UNESCO World's intangible cultural heritage. Today the country wants to do the same with one of its best-kept traditions: the espresso coffee.

Coffee is the second most consumed beverage in the world after water. The birth of the first espresso machine, invented in Italy at the end of the 19th century, has contributed to its global popularity.

Drinking espresso in Italy is a way of life, but for those who are behind the UNESCO application, there is more to it than that.

Ilaria Danesi, member of the Consortium for the Safe-guarding of Traditional Italian Espresso Coffee told Euronews that the UNESCO application for Italian espresso aims to "claim back the espresso's Italian identity".

"That's because the espresso originates from the creativity of Italians", she said.

When they are not at home, Italians have their espresso in coffee bars. It's a quick ritual. You order at the counter and you down it - in just a few seconds.

Standing at the bar and drinking an espresso coffee is something Italians would never give up. It's a break from daily life, and it's often an excuse to meet up to discuss business or talk to a friend. And most of all: it's cheap, so regardless of your background, it can be enjoyed and affordable to everyone.

■ But how to spot a quality espresso?

"The espresso coffee differs from other types of beverages that are available around the world, as it's the only one to have the typical "crema" on the surface", Danesi explained to Euronews.

Back in December, a group representing the Neapolitan espresso coffee also submitted an application that will run alongside with the one from the Consortium for the Safe-guarding of Traditional Italian Espresso Coffee.

But we'll have to wait a few more months to find out if either is successful.

(Source: Euronews)



ROUND THE GLOBE

Harar Jugol: A fortified historic town

The fortified historic town of Harar is located in the eastern part of Ethiopia, 525 km from the capital of Addis Ababa, on a plateau with deep gorges surrounded by deserts and savannah.

The walls surrounding this sacred city, considered "the fourth holy city" of Islam, were built between the 13th and 16th centuries and served as a protective barrier. There were five historic gates, which corresponded to the main roads to the town and also served to divide the city into five neighborhoods, but this division is not functional anymore. The Harar gate, from where the main streets lead to the center, is of recent construction.



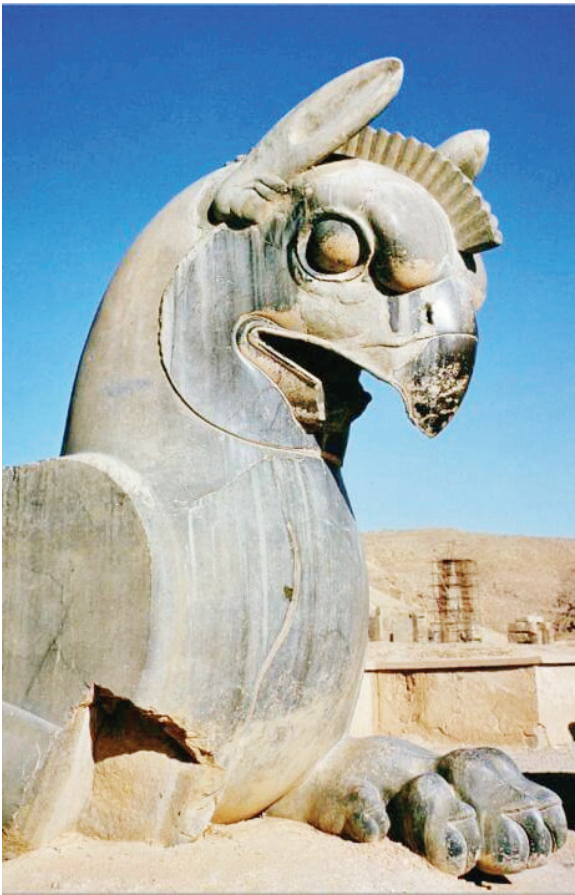
Harar Jugol numbers 82 mosques, three of which date from the 10th century, 102 shrines and a number of traditional, Indian and combined townhouses with unique interior designs, which constitute a spectacular part of Harar's cultural heritage.

The African and Islamic traditions influenced over a long period of time the development of the city and its typical urban planning and contributed to its particular character and uniqueness.

Harar functioned as the capital of the Harari Kingdom from 1520 to 1568, became an independent emirate in the 17th century and was integrated into Ethiopia in 1887. From the late 16th century to the 19th century Harar was an important trade centre between the coast and the interior highlands and a location for Islamic learning.

(Source: UNESCO)

Trump's threat to target Iranian cultural sites 'a huge crime against the worldwide civilization'



A photo collection depicts details of three UNESCO-registered sites in Iran.

TOURISM TEHRAN — Cultural and tourism officials, activists and fans across Iran, have signed petitions and issued statements in the past two days over Donald Trump's threat to target Iranian cultural sites, emphasizing that it equals a huge crime against the worldwide civilization.

Trump tweeted Saturday that if Iran attacks any American assets to avenge the killing of the IRGC Quds Force Qassem Soleimani, the U.S. has 52 targets across the Islamic Republic that "WILL BE HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD."

Some are "important to Iran & Iranian culture," Trump wrote on Twitter.

A petition by tourism activists urges the United Nations to take measures to end threat against human cultural heritages. The campaign has so far been supported by several officials including deputy tourism minister Vali Teymouri. ISNA reported on Monday.

"By signing this petition, I declare that the United States of America president's threat in attacking Iranian cultural and historical sites cannot be concerned as political issues and disagreements between governments and nations," the petition reads.

"Iranian historical and cultural heritage belong to human civilization and mankind in present, past and future. Any threats and damages to human cultural heritages by anybody in any countries equals a huge crime against the human worldwide civilization."

Meanwhile, the director of the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, Hojjatollah Ayyubi, in a letter to UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay, called for the UN body to both condemn the U.S. president's threats and inform the public of dangers of such behavior.

The official also reminded a 2017 UN Security Council resolution condemning the destruction of heritage sites, prompted by the actions of ISIS and other armed factions in Syria and Iraq.

"Threatening cultural heritage is a war crime," Iran's tourism minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan announced on Sunday in a reaction to the hostile message from the U.S. president.

Moreover, the National Museum of Iran issued a statement on Monday, denouncing Trump's threat to strike 52 Iranian targets that are important to

Iran and Iranian culture.

"Museum condemns U.S. President Donald Trump's recent tweet (11:52 January 4, 2020) threatening to strike 52 Iranian targets that are important to Iran and Iranian culture. This is clear that targeting cultural sites is against UNESCO's Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property during War and Protocol 1 of the Geneva Convention, Article 53 - Protection of cultural objects and of places of worship of 12 August 1949. Undoubtedly, such action to destroy cultural properties that belong to human heritage is a war crime, and we expect the international community to take necessary actions, even words, especially coming from high-profile political figures," the statement, signed by the museum's director Jebrael Nokandeh, reads.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, in reaction to the threat said such a move would be filed as a war crime and another breach of international law.

"Having committed grave breaches of int'l law in Friday's cowardly assassinations, @realdonaldtrump threatens to commit again new breaches of JUS COGENS," Zarif wrote in a tweet on Sunday.

"Targeting cultural sites is a WAR CRIME; Whether kicking or screaming, end of U.S. malign presence in West Asia has begun," Zarif added.

Trump's threats have also provoked criticism by some international celebrities and social media users that deliberately attacking cultural sites would be a war crime.

Ryan Goodman, a former special counsel at the U.S. Department of Defense emphasized that targeting "the clearly-recognized historic monuments, works

"By signing this petition, I declare that the United States of America president's threat in attacking Iranian cultural and historical sites cannot be concerned as political issues and disagreements between governments and nations."

With the Australia fires, is it safe to travel there now?

As bushfires continue to rage across Australia, with scenes of glowing red skies and scorched landscapes filling social media feeds around the world, travelers planning to visit the country in the coming weeks are likely wondering whether they should cancel or postpone their plans.

The short answer? It depends.

In recent days, many embassies and government bodies have updated their travel advice to citizens concerning travel to Australia, telling them to stay abreast of the situation by following local media and be prepared to comply with any evacuation orders.

"Australia continues to battle serious bushfires across multiple regions," says the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in its latest update.

"Authorities in some regions have declared a State of Emergency and ordered road closures and evacuations. Poor air quality can occur some distance from the sites of the fires and provoke respiratory conditions.

"If you're in or near an affected area or planning any travel, stay safe, monitor TV news, radio and social media channels for updates, and follow the instructions and advice of local authorities."

Travelers are also advised to check with their insurance providers and read the fine print, as certain situations — i.e. a government ordered state of emergency — may invalidate coverage.

Tourism Australia released a general

press statement on January 3, writing "many areas are unaffected and most tourism businesses are still open."

"It is more important than ever that we rally around our communities and the tourism sector who may have been impacted," Phillipa Harrison, managing director of Tourism Australia, said in the statement.

"We would encourage all travelers coming to Australia to seek the most up-to-date information prior to departure, and remain informed about changing conditions whilst on the ground."

Fires have hit every Australian state, but New South Wales and Victoria — home to the cities of Sydney and Melbourne, respectively — are presently in the worse shape.

Victoria is currently under a state of disaster and NSW has declared a state of emergency — both granting extraordinary powers and additional government resources to battle the fires.

Sydney itself is presently safe from the fires, as is Melbourne, though the coastal regions between these two cities have been hit hard — particularly the South Coast, which stretches south from Sydney to the Victoria border. Authorities in early January dubbed this a "Tourist Leave Zone," advising travelers to evacuate.

Air quality is also a concern, so travelers heading to destinations with poor conditions may want to consider wearing

P2 rated masks, which can filter out the hazardous microscopic PM2.5 particles produced by bushfire smoke.

Global website Aqicn.org offers real-time updates on air quality. The air quality in Sydney is currently listed as "Moderate," though forecast to hit hazardous levels later this week. Air quality in Melbourne is currently graded "Unhealthy."

The Australian Capital Territory is now under a state of alert, with AQI listing Canberra's air quality as "Hazardous." The country's flag carrier, Qantas, canceled all flights to and from Canberra on Sunday due to hazardous weather conditions.

South Australia, popular for its vineyards, is also facing several heavy fires but air quality in its capital, Adelaide, is currently rated as "good."

Off the coast of South Australia, popular tourist getaway Kangaroo Island has been severely affected by the fires as well.

Several of the island's resorts have been destroyed or badly damaged, according to CNN affiliate 7 News, as well as large swaths of Flinders National Park.

Queensland, which recently faced its own spate of fires, reportedly has the situation under control. Nevertheless, "bushfire warnings are in place and visitors should ensure they stay up-to-date with the latest information and advice being issued by Queensland Fire and

of art or places of worship" was a war crime.

Colin Kahl, former deputy assistant to President Barack Obama and national security adviser to ex-vice president Joe Biden said that "the Pentagon would not provide Trump targeting options that include Iranian cultural sites."

John G Hertzler, an actor and an author, reacted by saying that the American people "are not" behind Trump in response to a Twitterer, who said he backed the president.

Eugene Gu, a politically active user on social media, said "the President of the United States should never threaten on Twitter or anywhere else to target another country's non-military cultural sites."

Oscar-winning American actor and film narrator Morgan Freeman also lashed out at Trump for threatening to target Iranian cultural sites, stressing that Trump was not his president.

"Targeting cultural sites is a WAR CRIME and makes you no better than the terror you claim to be fighting," Freeman wrote in a tweet.

After an al-Qaeda affiliated group destroyed ancient religious monuments in Timbuktu, Mali, in 2012, the International Criminal Court took on a unique criminal case: prosecuting cultural destruction, CNN said on Monday.

An attack on a cultural site would violate several international treaties and would likely be considered a war crime.

In 2017, for example, a United Nations Security Council resolution "condemns the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, including the destruction of religious sites and artifacts." That resolution came as a response to the ISIS's destruction of a number of major historic and cultural sites in Syria and Iraq in 2014 and 2015.

The 1954 Hague Convention, of which the U.S. is a party, bars any military from "direct hostilities against cultural property."

Iran embraces hundreds of historical sites such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 22 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Emergency Services (QFES)," advises the Queensland Tourism body. Queensland state capital Brisbane's air quality is currently ranked "Good" by AQI.

At the moment, Western Australia is dealing with several blazes but these are reportedly under control and the state — including capital Perth — remains safe to visit. Air quality in Perth is currently rated "good."

Authorities in Northern Territory, home to Kakadu National Park and Uluru, are dealing with a handful of fires but overall the state is safe to visit.

Tasmania too is facing a series of blazes though these are reportedly under control and local communities are not presently at risk.

How to stay updated on the situation Travelers can keep up-to-date by using the "Fires Near Me" app, developed by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Australia's primary emergency call service number is Triple Zero (000), which can be dialed from any fixed or mobile phone.

Unfortunately, Australia is only just entering its summer season. Normally, temperatures peak in January and February, meaning the country could be months away from finding relief.

The fires are unlikely to end entirely since they are an annually occurring event — and may even get worse if recent years are an indicator.

(Source: CNN)

Trump going his own way, not his country's way: U.S. analyst

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – An American political analyst described US President Donald Trump a “joke” to all other world leaders and a majority of the world's population, saying he is seen to go his own way, not his country's way.

“We're living in a very warped picture of typical status quo America where everything has either been turned around or exposed. The president, once respected world-wide, is a joke to all other world leaders and a majority of the world's population. He is seen as completely out of his league but still dangerous enough to both go his own way, not his country's way, and still be controlled by forces stronger than him. Why else would he buddy up with Kim Jong-il one moment yet do the State and Defense Departments bidding by bombing Iranian allies within Iraq?”, Myles Hoenig, who ran for the US Congress in 2016 as a Green Party candidate, told Tasnim.

Following is the full text of the interview:

■ Recently, US President Donald Trump said he “did not really care” about a trial in the US Senate following his impeachment by the House of Representatives, but he would be happy to have a trial. What are your thoughts on the comments?

A: It really doesn't matter at this point whether or not Trump wants a trial or even if Pelosi is interested in passing it over to the Senate for a trial. These last 3+ years has been a political 3-ring circus where the MC has been from the old school where there's a sucker born every minute.

We're living in a very warped picture of typical status quo America where everything has either been turned around or exposed. The president, once respected world-wide, is a joke to all other world leaders and a majority of the world's population. He is seen as completely out of his league but still dangerous enough to both go his own way, not his country's way, and still be controlled by forces stronger than him. Why else would he buddy up with Kim Jong-il one moment yet do the State and Defense Departments bidding by bombing Iranian allies within Iraq?

What has been exposed, thanks much to Donald Trump, is the incessant racism and class



divisions, as well as class exploitation, that has long endured in the US. Many of the very people with the pitchforks out are those who are most hurt by the Trumps of the world, destroying their hopes of a decent middle-class lifestyle yet giving them the raw meat to make them forget, or even forgive, the crimes being committed against them. With Obama and all presidents before him, American exceptionalism was the diet, but Trump's raw meat is outright hostility towards minority groups and the Democratic Party, ironic being that the two main parties are essentially actors on behalf of Wall Street. They just exploit the middle and working classes in different ways.

What does matter in Trump's impeachment, trial or not, is how history will view it, as there is no objective analysis at work at present. Nixon was resurrected by the press for his foreign policy advancements and even compared to many of the Democrats who are running today who are to Nixon's Right. Everyone loved Reagan, especially Democratic party operatives who cried crocodile tears for the cameras and future funders when he died. But how historians and others will view

Trump in decades to come is an open book.

■ Trump and his Republican allies have attacked the impeachment effort as “illegitimate”. In their articles of impeachment, Democrats say that Trump abused his power as president by pressuring Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to help him win re-election. Democrats also charge Trump with obstructing the Congress. What do you think?

A: This is likely the first time in recent memory in which the charge of illegitimacy is thrown out when there happens to be a political issue or strategy at play. There is nothing illegitimate about impeachment, as it is the attempted removal of a president through political, not legal, means. But if the president can scream it long and loud enough, it certainly beefs up his base's animus for all who oppose their chosen one.

What Trump did regarding Zelenskiy goes beyond the normal blackmail, extortion and threats that all presidents apply to other presidents weaker than them. This time Trump delved right into electoral politics, something almost like a third rail. Simply receiving campaign contributions is strictly forbidden and

asking a president of another country to give him an edge in an election seems far worse. That's also not to say it doesn't happen as the visit by Netanyahu of Israel during an election period to oppose the Iran nuclear deal was an outright abuse of power on behalf of the Republicans who invited him to speak on the matter.

Trump's obstruction of Congress is also quite obvious but could have been mitigated if the democratically controlled Congress waited it out. But again, impeachment is a political process and waiting it out was not a political option for them.

■ Trump's re-election campaign manager claimed the \$46m raised in the last quarter was boosted by a surge of donations in the wake of the impeachment. Tulsi Gabbard also said recently that impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump will increase the chances of a comprehensive Republican victory in the 2020 election. Do you believe so?

A: Impeachment can be a two-edged sword. People look at how Clinton not only survived but his party prospered as a result of his impeachment. However, Nixon's near-impeachment worked against his party, as Jimmy Carter succeeded Nixon's replacement and people talked of how long it would take for the Republicans to recover. In actuality, it was only 4 years.

It shouldn't be a surprise that the Trump campaign raised so much money as a result of the impeachment. Impeachment is a winning issue- for both sides when it comes to fundraising. It can be either 'they are against us' or 'look how we followed through on our Constitutional obligations in spite of the potential political risk'.

No one can say how it will play out as this is such a rare occurrence. Just like billions of dollars are spent on presidential elections but one side will lose. So much for billions of dollars at play. The more likely scenario of a near-guarantee of a Trump victory is dependent upon whom the Democrats select to go up against him. The two extreme scenarios is Biden, almost a guarantee loss or Sanders, a more likely victory, with all other candidates not having the muscle to withstand the more effective onslaught of Republican campaign strategies.

By combating Daesh, Iran's Gen. Soleimani ruined U.S. plans: ex-adviser

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A political analyst and former US government adviser underlined the major role of Iran's Martyr Qassem Soleimani in the collapse of the Daesh (ISIS or ISIL) terrorist group and said the top commander was working against Washington's plans and objectives.

“By fighting against Daesh, Soleimani and al-Muhandis were working against US plans and objectives,” Paul Larudee from San Francisco said in an interview with Tasnim, referring to Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), also known as Hashd al-Sha'abi.

Larudee is an Iranian-born American political activist and human rights volunteer, who works with the International Solidarity Movement. He is a former contracted US government adviser to Saudi Arabia and a founder of the Free Gaza and Free Palestine Movements.

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: Iran recently had joint military exercises with Russia and China. This is very worrisome to the US and its allies, especially Saudi Arabia and Israel, which are also worried about Iranian influence in Iraq and Syria, and its alliance with Hezbollah in Lebanon. The US is obviously a bigger threat to Iran than Iran is to the US, but the US requires subjugation from all nations. It therefore wishes to teach a lesson to any nation that chooses to

follow an independent course. Any attempt by Iran to defend itself by forming cooperative agreements with other nations is therefore viewed as a danger to US interests. This is at least part of the reason that the US chose to escalate its violence against Iran by means of this assassination.

■ 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: The US chose to assassinate General Soleimani while he was in Iraq and in the company of the Iraqi PMU leader, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, who was also assassinated. Both were engaged in fighting Daesh. It is widely known that the US uses Daesh and al-Qaeda fighters as mercenary troops to weaken or destroy nations that resist US imperialist ambitions. It destroyed and is destroying Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, and it is pursuing similar aims in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. Iran is next on its list, and Iran is an obstacle to the US objective of destroying these nations and weakening Russia and China at the same time. By fighting against Daesh, Soleimani and al-Muhandis were working against US plans and objectives.

■ 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: It is possible that nothing can prevent war with the US, if the US is determined to create such a war. But war is not popular in the US. Elements of American society are ready to resist such destructive policies, and they are natural allies of countries like Iran that want only to peacefully pursue their own interests without becoming a puppet of larger powers. Iran's cultivation of mutual interest with Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and especially the larger powers of Russia and China can be very important to Iran's preservation. It is appropriate and expected for Iran to inflict proportionate pain upon the US for the assassination of General Soleimani, but also to confer with countries like Russia and China about the type of response. The attacks by Israel upon Lebanon and Syria should be studied, as well as the responses by Hezbollah and the Syrian military forces. Russia's response to the shooting down of its aircraft in Syria can also be instructive. Ultimately, concessions by the US might be more useful to Iran than revenge, but in the absence of good will, proportionate acts of deterrence are a reasonable response.

Gen. Soleimani's assassination extra-judicial, war crime: ex-U.S. senate candidate

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Mark Dankof, a former US Senate candidate, called the US assassination of Lt. General Qassem Soleimani “extra-judicial” and a “war crime” under international law.

“... the Democrats would be on absolutely solid ground in impeaching the President for his extra-judicial assassination of General Soleimani, a war crime under international law, and ... if I were in the US Senate as a truly “America-First” Senator from the Taft-Buchanan-Ron Paul wing of the GOP I would vote to convict him,” Dankof, who is also a broadcaster and pastor in San Antonio, Texas, told Tasnim in an interview.

Mark Dankof is a broadcaster for The Ugly Truth Podcast. Born in Wiesbaden, Germany, the son of a United States Air Force Colonel, he graduated from Valparaiso University in 1977 and from Chicago's Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1983. In recent years, he has pursued post-graduate work in systematic theology and theological German at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Formerly the 36th District Chairman of the Republican Party in King County/Seattle and later an elected delegate to Texas State Republican Conventions in 1994 and 1996, he entered the United States Senate race in Delaware in 2000 as the nominated candidate of the Constitution Party against Democratic candidate Thomas Carper and Republican incumbent William Roth.

Following is the full text of the interview:



■ Recently, US President Donald Trump said he “did not really care” about a trial in the US Senate following his impeachment by the House of Representatives, but he would be happy to have a trial. What are your thoughts on the comments?

A: Trump understands that the Ukraine Gate-basis for his impeachment in the House and subsequent trial in the Senate is a complete political travesty that will benefit him, on top of the fact that he knows that the votes for his conviction are not there in the Senate, which will draw out the process by design, and then ultimately acquit him.

■ Trump and his Republican allies have attacked the impeachment effort as “illegitimate”. In their articles of impeachment, Democrats say that Trump abused his power as president by pressuring Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to help him win re-election. Democrats also charge Trump with obstructing the Congress. What do you think?

A: I just told your Press TV in a taping that the Democrats would be on absolutely solid ground in impeaching the President for his extra-judicial assassination of General Soleimani, a war crime under international law, and that if I were in the US Senate as a truly “America-First” Senator from the Taft-Buchanan-Ron Paul wing of the GOP I would vote to convict him. But the Zionist-controlled character of both of the major parties on Capitol Hill guarantees that this will never happen. Even worse, I believe as I told Press TV a few minutes ago, that the 2020 Presidential “election” in the United States will provide the American public with the choice between Zionist-Criminal A and Zionist-Criminal B. In any event, what began with George Herbert Walker Bush in Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and accelerated after a fully orchestrated Pearl Harbor-like 9-11 attack in 2001, is quite likely to involve the United States as the chief provocateur (along with Israel) in igniting World War III. I emphasize what Ron Paul did earlier today, that Trump's assassination of General Soleimani is also the “assassination of the America-First movement.” People who claim to be a part of that movement must understand that the criminal actions of Trump and his Zionist-cabal are not a part of the foreign policy of George Washington, Charles Lindbergh, Senator Robert Taft, Pat Buchanan, and Ron Paul. No one who truly understands this has any business supporting Trump in 2020. And it is likely that Tulsi Gabbard is the only announced Democratic

Presidential Candidate in 2020 who understands this as well, which is why she's being savaged by the Zionist-cabal in her own party, and by a Zionist-controlled American media.

■ Trump's re-election campaign manager claimed the \$46m raised in the last quarter was boosted by a surge of donations in the wake of the impeachment. Tulsi Gabbard also said recently that impeachment proceedings against Donald Trump will increase the chances of a comprehensive Republican victory in the 2020 election. Do you believe so?

A: I would have agreed with Mrs. Gabbard prior to the assassination of General Soleimani. I'm not sure how this plays out now, except that minus the election of Mrs. Gabbard herself, we will be involved in a catastrophically new phase of these Zionist wars, regardless of the outcome in the 2020 Presidential election in the United States, and the composition of the American House of Representatives and the Senate thereafter. Frankly, we may not make it to the election before global war breaks out. I hope I am wrong about this. But if a new phase of war does break out, the average American is likely to follow Franklin Delano Trump 2020 into the end of the American Empire and possibly the planet itself. Let us pray together for a Non-Apocalypse this year, and for sanity to return on the part of the government and people of the United States. But I am not an optimist on this front.

Iran's Gen. Soleimani was feared in Washington, Tel Aviv, U.S. activist says

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A peace activist and journalist based in the US state of Virginia described Iran's Martyr Qassem Soleimani as “a major figure” in the fight against terrorist groups in the Middle East and said the US and Israeli regimes were fearful of him.

“General Soleimani was a major figure in combatting the terrorist assets used by the US to justify their illegal occupation in Syria as well as a return of US forces in strength to Iraq,” Janice Kortkamp from Leesburg, Virginia, said in an interview with Tasnim.

“He was feared in Washington and Tel Aviv because he was an effective strategist and inspiration to the Resistance,” she added.

Janice Kortkamp became an independent, completely self-funded, journalist after “seeing Western media bias regarding Syria and how that bias was promoting war and destabilization in Syria and all the Levant”. She has researched the current crisis for six years, putting in over 7,000 hours of study. She has visited Syria five times over the past three years, spending months traveling around the major population areas and the outskirts of Damascus, Homs, Latakia (including Kessab), Hama, Palmyra, Deir Ezzor and Aleppo. She has also gone to Germany, Lebanon, and Kuwait to meet with Syrian refugees and emigrants. Through friends and contacts in Syria as well as reports from genuine news sources around the world, she tracks the situation on the ground in Syria on an hourly basis.



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: As an American, I am appalled at the continuing lawlessness of the government here and its never-ending aggression against Iran and its people and the depths of deceit it will go to cover its own crimes. I want to send my personal condolences to the people of Iran and I honor the sacrifice of the great general. The warmongers of Washington DC have been working for many years to destabilize Iran (and the region) and to initiate war against it for several reasons. First is because of Israeli pressure both from Israel and the pro-Israel lobby in America. Israel understands that Iran, with its strong and battle-experienced army, is a threat to their ambitions to take all of Palestine and to expand into other countries, particularly Lebanon to start. Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah have made their dreams of conquest impossible. The second reason is because the US has become completely militaristic while totally abandoning diplomacy. Policymakers, both elected and behind the scenes advisers, portray Iran as an enemy because of Iran's unwillingness to accept US dictates over Iran's alliances, policies, actions – and trade agreements. Iran is the land door between the rest of the Middle East and China and Russia. The warmongers who control US policy will not accept anything short of total submission to their dictates; any country not willing to submit is targeted for ‘regime change’ operations and pressure consisting of sanctions, threats, isolation, and covert and overt military attacks. The third reason is because both Netanyahu and Trump are facing serious trouble in their own countries and both will use war to distract their citizens from opposing them and their corruption and crimes.

■ 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: I think it is a huge factor. General Soleimani was a major figure in combatting the terrorist assets used by the US to justify their illegal occupation in Syria as well as a return of US forces in strength to Iraq. He was feared in Washington and Tel Aviv because he was an effective strategist and inspiration to the Resistance. The importance of the victory over Daesh in Deir Ezzor cannot be overstated as it showed the world the effectiveness and commitment to fighting terrorists and US imperialism by Syria and Iran as well as the Popular Mobilization Units of Iraq.

■ 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 is the hard question. Ayatollah Khamenei must make this difficult decision. To not respond to this horrific act of war is impossible; however, it will be necessary to do it wisely as I believe Iran will do in order to produce the desired outcome of victory. I think this will require increased diplomatic efforts in Europe particularly to get an international outcry against the assassination of General Soleimani and recognition of the murder as an act of war. The government in Iraq must force all American troops including mercenary contractors from its soil in retaliation. Russia and China need to be very clearly on the side of international law and support Iran. In addition, the Persian Gulf countries should react to this war crime as a strike against the sovereignty of every nation in the region and end their inevitably self-destructive pandering to the dictates of Washington and by extension, Israel. There is, of course, the risk of full out war by the US against Iran and war is always devastating even though I have no doubt that in a conventional war Iran's forces would be victorious. Conventional war is not how wars are conducted at this point though. Cyber and economic warfare, proxy and mercenary armies, drone strikes, even the possibility of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons attacks must all be considered. The one thing I could see as bringing an end to the various US aggressions in the Middle East would be an obvious consensus and unity by powers in and outside of the region against further US escalation and aggression.

Counting Whales From Space: scientists and engineers plan hi-tech effort

An aquarium and an engineering firm in Massachusetts are working on a project to better protect whales – by monitoring them from space.

The New England Aquarium, based in Boston, and Draper, a firm based in nearby Cambridge, say new and higher-tech solutions are needed in order to protect whales from extinction. So they are using data from sources such as satellites, sonar and radar to keep a closer eye on how many whales are in the ocean.



A project involving complex data and surveillance has an easy to understand name: Counting Whales From Space. But John Irvine, chief scientist for data analytics at Draper, said that was the only simple thing about the project.

“If whales are moving out of one area and into another,” Irving said, “what’s the reason for that? Is it due to ocean warming? Is it changes in commercial shipping lanes? These are all questions we’ll be able to start answering once we have the data.”

The work will involve gathering data from sources ranging from European space agencies to amateur radio operators, in order to create a probability map of where in the ocean the whales might be, Irvine said. Conservation groups will then be able to monitor whales and their movements, he said.

The aquarium and Draper have committed a combined \$1m to the project, which is expected to develop over several years.

Aerial surveys are the most frequently used method to count whales, partners on the project said. However, that approach is expensive, subject to bad weather conditions and can be dangerous.

Project members said their goal is to develop new technology that uses specially designed algorithms to process data and monitor whales. Exactly what the final product could look like is a work in progress, Irvine said, but the goal is a “global watch on whale movement”.

The technology could be used to monitor whales anywhere in the world, said Vikki Spruill, president of New England Aquarium, but some of the most pressing need for monitoring is just off New England.

Those waters are a home to the endangered North Atlantic right whale, which numbers only about 400 and is declining. Better data and surveillance tools could help inform conservation of the species and others elsewhere, Spruill said, especially since whales rarely respect international boundaries.

“These are animals that move across large areas of our ocean,” she said. “Large marine animals don’t have boundaries like we would think of on land.”

(Source: The Guardian)

WORDS IN THE NEWS

European Union enlargement

(October 09, 2002)

The European Commission, the executive part of the European Union, will declare today which candidate countries it feels are ready to join the EU. The commission will recommend that ten countries, mainly from formerly communist Eastern Europe should join. A final decision on their admission is due to be taken at the end of the year. This report from Tim Franks:

This is about **nothing less than** a complete **redrawing** of Europe’s political map. It’s an immense and ambitious project. Its supporters talk of the historic prize of reuniting Western and Eastern Europe. That’s not to say though that the European Union is welcoming these ten candidate countries **with open arms and wide smiles**.

The European Commission, in its report today, will publish a **litany** of continued failings in the applicants, from weak border controls to badly managed economies, to cultures of corruption. Negotiators from the candidate countries themselves say that’s a **bit tough**. The process of change demanded by the EU has, for many of the countries, been extremely **demanding**. At least though, the overall assessment is that they are, with some further reform, ready to join in two years’ time. For Turkey, there’s only disappointment. Despite recent constitutional changes and a long lobbying campaign, the European Commission says that this huge country, to the south-east of Europe, should not yet be given a **start date** for **accession** negotiations. One Turkish diplomat told the BBC that that was **tantamount to** the EU saying that it wanted to remain an exclusively Christian club.

Words

nothing less than: something which is so important that it can only be described as
redrawing: change
with open arms and wide smiles: (to welcome) warmly and sincerely
litany: a long list – literally a long list of saints’ names chanted in Christian churches – here the meaning is metaphorical
a bit tough: a little harsh and unfair
demanding: difficult to carry out
a long lobbying campaign: long-lasting efforts by groups of people to persuade the government or in this case the European Commission that a particular thing should be done
a start date: a time when something can begin
accession: becoming a member of the EU
tantamount to: almost the same as

(Source: BBC)



Every action has a reaction. We have one planet; one chance.

Tens of places in Iran renamed after Gen. Soleimani

SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — Tens of important places including streets and highways, squares, airports, and stadiums across Iran were renamed after Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the IRGC Quds Force commander who was martyred in a U.S. terrorist assault in Baghdad on Friday.

Resalat highway in Tehran, Mehran border terminal in Ilam province, and Ahvaz International Airport are among the main places.

Also, a 15,000-seat stadium being built in Semnan province, Shariati bridge in the city of Dezful, the entrance square of the city of

Yazd, the biggest subway station in Alborz province, and Imam Khomeini Boulevard in Qazvin province were renamed to Soleimani.

Many other places across the country will be also renamed after martyr Soleimani to commemorate and pay tribute to such dedicated hero.

The U.S. airstrike also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMU). Both Soleimani and Muhandis were popular figureheads in helping squelch an ominous rise of Daesh which once came as close as 30 km to Baghdad.



School books to reflect martyr Soleimani’s selfless devotion



SOCIETY **TEHRAN** — The life, martyrdom, and selfless devotion of the IRGC Quds Force Commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani will be included in school books as of next year, an official with the Ministry of Education has announced.

“We have already prepared contents related to General Soleimani’s life to be published in school books in order to introduce him to students as a role model,” Mehr quoted Homayoun Sadooghi as saying on Monday.

“However, now we will include his martyrdom in the school books to make the students aware of the U.S. acts of unimaginable cruelty,” he highlighted.

He went on to state that by the next three years, a com-

plete narration of General Soleimani’s dedicated life will be published in all school books.

Ali Zol-Elm, deputy education minister, also said that the character of martyr Soleimani will be introduced to school books as an inspiring role model for students.

“He will always be remembered for his allegiance, valor, bravery, and sacrifice. Students need to get acquainted with these great stories of heroes, and so do we all,” he highlighted.

The U.S. terrorist forces assassinated Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the second-in-command of Iraq’s pro-government Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), in an airstrike ordered by Donald Trump at Baghdad’s international airport early on Friday.

Entire species may have been wiped out by inferno, conservationists say

Conservationists and wildlife experts are anxious that raging bushfires sweeping through Australia have resulted in “catastrophic losses”, amid fears an entire species may have been wiped out.

Populations of small marsupials called dunnarts and glossy black cockatoos may have been destroyed in the fires that burned a third of Kangaroo Island, experts say.

The island, located off the country’s southern coast, is known as Australia’s answer to the Galapagos Islands – but what remains has been described as a “scorched wasteland”.

Ecologists are hoping to find survivors of the dunnart population and rescue them “before they are completely gone”.

Heidi Groffen, an ecologist and coordinator for the nonprofit Kangaroo Island Land for Wildlife, said the mouse-like marsupials are too small to outrun wild-fires and the population of around 300 may have been wiped out.

But she remained hopeful some may have found refuge in the crevices of rocks.

“Even if there are survivors, there is no food for them now,” she said. “We’re hoping to bring some into captivity before they are completely gone.”

Pat Hodgens, a fauna ecologist for the same nonprofit, told the The Independent: “It’s early days, fires are still burning but we have lost a lot of critical refugia for endangered species which will affect long term viability of these species.

“The Kangaroo Island dunnart is our

main species of concern and it looks like its entire known [habitat] range has been fried. We are locating unburnt remnant patches of its habitat to see if we can locate it through camera trapping.”

Mr Hodgens said a team has already set cameras to try and detect any survivors, and hope to locate all potential areas the species may persist in through drone mapping.

The 50,000-strong koala population on the island has also suffered devastating losses, with as much as half the population believed to have been killed by the fires.?

And it is unclear how many from a unique flock of the rare glossy black cockatoos escaped the blazes and whether they have a future on an island where much of their habitat has turned to ash.

Daniella Teixeira, a conservation biologist working on a doctoral degree about the birds at the University of Queensland, said: “We don’t know the extent of the damage on the KI glossy habitat but we do know that critical areas of feeding and breeding areas have been burnt. Currently a waiting game.”

She believes the birds were in “the best position to escape” the fires because they were able to fly away, but like the dunnarts, the cockatoos may find they don’t have enough food left on the island.

The birds only feed from a single type of tree known as the dropping she-oak, and many hot spots on the island continue to burn.

Ms Teixeira said careful conservation



work over the past 25 years has seen the glossy black cockatoo population increase from 150, but those gains have been wiped out in the space of a week.

Sam Mitchell, co-owner of the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park, said: “We are seeing kangaroos and koalas with their hands burned off – they stand no chance. It’s been quite emotional.

“We will do whatever we can to rehabilitate the native wildlife but it’s going to take years to recover,” he told Adelaide Now.

A fundraiser set up for the Kangaroo Island Wildlife Park has raised A\$183,464 (£97,400), far more than its original A\$15,000 goal.

The park said funds will go towards “veterinary costs, koala milk and supplements, extra holding/rehabilitation enclosures, as well as setting up a building to hold supplies to treat these animals”.

Throughout the country, officials estimate that half a billion animals have been affected since the fires began raging.

Professor Chris Dickman from the University of Sydney told 7News the challenge of rebuilding wildlife populations is a long-term one.

“There are a lot of people out there helping by going into areas that have been burned to look for koalas and any other native wildlife [that have] been affected.

“In the longer term, the rebuilding of populations of many native species is going to be the issue,” he said. “A lot will have been undoubtedly very badly affected by these fires.”?

A spokesperson for the Australia’s Department of the Environment and Energy said: “Planning is already underway through the Australian government Department of the Environment and Energy to work with scientists, state organisations, national parks authorities, natural resource managers and indigenous land managers to identify recovery priorities and future protection strategies.

“Funding is already in place for koala hospitals and additional funding will be directed towards koala habitats. Mapping is already commencing in some areas of northern NSW to understand fire impacts on koala habitats and determine the most effective options going forward.”

The spokesperson added there was a waiting period for fire-affected areas to be declared safe before authorities can begin to fully assess the impact of the blazes.

(Source: The Independent)

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

A ← → ع

Mental health screening scheme to be launched at schools

A scheme to determine the prevalence and incidence of psychiatric disorders in students will be implemented at schools across the country by the next school year (starting on September 23), director for education department at the Ministry of Education has said. Since last year, all students on seventh to ninth grades have undergone the mental health screening, so, we decided to conduct the tests on students on all grades, ISNA quoted Masoud Shokouhi as saying on Saturday. “The scheme will be launched by the beginning of the next school year,” he added.

For the current school year, screening of mental health was carried out in February and the results were presented to consultants for in-school or individual counseling, he said.

There are several types of screening that baseline testing is done by teachers, who record their observations on the system, he explained, adding, in the next step, specialist interventions will take place whether by the school counselor or counseling services outside the schools.

PREFIX/SUFFIX

“heli- or helio-”

■ **Meaning:** sun or sunlight

■ **For example:** We have mentioned the newly hatched larv of the barnacle in connection with *heliotropism*.

PHRASAL VERB

Pick on somebody/something

■ **Meaning:** to behave in an unfair way to someone, for example by blaming them or criticizing them unfairly

■ **For example:** Why don’t you pick on someone else for a change?

IDIOM

Dance to someone’s tune

■ **Explanation:** If you dance to someone’s tune, you do whatever that person tells you to do

■ **For example:** He is the company’s major shareholder so the management has to dance to his tune.

غربالگری «سلامت روان دانش آموزان» کلیه مقاطع تحصیلی از مهرماه

مدیرکل امور تربیتی و مشاوره وزارت آموزش و پرورش، اعلام کرد که از مهرماه آینده غربالگری پایه سلامت روان برای همه دانش آموزان در کلیه مقاطع تحصیلی انجام می‌شود.

مسعود شکوهی در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا، افزود: تا سال گذشته همه دانش آموزان پایه هفتم، هشتم و بخشی از دانش آموزان پایه نهم مورد سنجش قرار گرفتند.

وی اظهار کرد: غربالگری پایه سلامت روان برای همه دانش آموزان از سال تحصیلی جدید آغاز می‌شود.

مدیرکل امور تربیتی و مشاوره وزارت آموزش و پرورش ادامه داد: برای سال تحصیلی جاری، غربالگری اولیه سلامت روان بهمن ماه سال ۹۷ انجام شد و نتایج آن جهت استفاده مشاورین در برنامه ریزی‌های درون مدرسه‌ای و فردی در اختیارشان قرار گرفت.

شکوهی افزود: چند نوع غربالگری داریم که غربالگری پایه توسط معلمان انجام می‌شود و معلمان مشاهدات خود را در سامانه همگان ثبت می‌کنند. در مراحل بعدی در صورت نیاز مداخلات تخصصی از سطح مشاور مدرسه تا هسته‌های مشاوره در سطوح استانی و واحدهای

مددکاری در بیرون آموزش و پرورش صورت می‌گیرد.

Iraqi top leaders mourn martyrs killed by U.S. strike

Iraq's top leaders were receiving condolences Monday for Iraqi Shia martyrs killed along with top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, in a U.S. airstrike last week.

The gathering in Baghdad comes a day after parliament voted in a favor of a bill requesting the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the country.

The non-binding vote to end the presence of 5,200 American troops, which still requires the approval of the Iraqi government, highlighted the sharp deterioration in relations between Washington and Baghdad in recent weeks, amid soaring tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

President Donald Trump promptly warned Iraq that he would levy punishing sanctions if the Iraqi government expelled American troops.

Outgoing Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi thanked all the mourners who attended the condolences at the prime minister's office in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone Monday, and extolled an Iraqi militia commander killed in Friday's airstrike as a hero.

Iraqis were unanimously outraged by the U.S. attack, which in addition to killing Soleimani killed senior militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis and several others. Al-Muhandis was



the deputy commander of the Popular Mobilization Forces, an Iraqi umbrella group of mostly Shia paramilitaries, and a senior militia commander during the war against the ISIL terrorist group.

Outgoing Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi thanked all the mourners who attended the condolences and called al-Muhandis a "heroic leader" with a "pure soul."

■ Iraq files complaint to UNSC over U.S. assassination of Lt. Gen. Soleimani

Meanwhile, Iraq says it has lodged a formal complaint to the UN chief and the UN Security Council (UNSC) over the US assassination of Iran's top military commander, Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, and the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

The Iraqi foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday that it had submitted two letters of complaint to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the UNSC, asking the world body to condemn the assassination of General Soleimani and Muhandis in a US drone strike near Baghdad International Airport in the early hours of Friday.

According to the statement, the complaint is about "American attacks and aggression on Iraqi military positions and the assassination of Iraqi and allied high-level military commanders on Iraqi soil."

The assassination was "a dangerous breach of Iraqi sovereignty and of the terms of US presence in Iraq," the ministry added. Four other Iranians as well as four Iraqis accompanying them were also martyred in the US strike.

The Pentagon said in a statement on Friday that American President Donald Trump had personally ordered the US military to assassinate the top Iranian commander.

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Iraq's Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, along with the Arab country's president, Barham Salih, have already denounced the deadly airstrike as a flagrant breach of Iraq's sovereignty and a sheer violation of international agreements.

(Source: agencies)

France enters week of talks amid pension strikes

A crucial week of negotiations between trade unions and government officials has begun in France amid nationwide protests and transport strikes against plans to overhaul the pension system.

"A compromise has never been so close," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told France Inter radio on Monday, with talks between the prime minister and workers' representatives set to resume on Tuesday.

France's President Emmanuel Macron held a Cabinet meeting on Monday ahead of the talks, and the government is "not inflexible", Le Maire said, suggesting there is room for negotiation including on the financing of the pension system.

Several unions have called for nationwide protests on Thursday and Saturday, while the hard-left CGT union also called for workers to disrupt the country's oil depots and refineries later this week.

The national rail company, SNCF, said train traffic was improving across the country on Monday, with eight out of 10 high-speed trains running.

Yet the Paris Metro was still severely disrupted, with

most lines open only for a limited amount of time and several stations closed.

In his televised New Year's address, Macron vowed to carry out the overhaul of the pension system, but called on his government to find a "quick compromise" with unions.

Macron wants to unify France's 42 different pension schemes, some of which grant early retirement, into a single one. Plans include raising the eligibility age for full pensions from 62 to 64, the most vocally criticised measure.

The strike pits Macron, a 42-year-old former investment banker who took office in 2017 on a promise of opening up France's highly regulated economy, against powerful unions who say he is set on dismantling worker protections.

Macron says the new system will be fairer and financially sustainable, but unions fear it will make people work longer for lower pensions. Recent polls show a majority of French people support the protest movement.

France's trade unions have spearheaded nationwide strikes since early December in an outcry over the pensions overhaul, disrupting schools, railways and roads, while lending support to regular protests.



Mass demonstrations in Paris have seen police use tear gas against protesters close to tourist hotspots like the Centre Pompidou museum of modern art, where some demonstrators had erected barricades, set fire to them and smashed up a bus stop.

(Source: agencies)

Erdogan: Turkish soldiers gradually being deployed to Libya

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said Ankara started moving military units to Libya to support the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, one of the two rival administrations in the North African country.

Sunday's announcement comes days after Turkey's parliament approved the deployment of troops in Libya after it received a request for military support from the GNA, headed by Fayez al-Sarraj.

The GNA's request came as it finds off a months-long offensive by renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar's eastern-based forces, which have received support from Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

"There will be an operation center [in Libya], there will be a Turkish lieutenant general leading and they will be managing

the situation over there. [Turkish soldiers] are gradually moving there right now," Erdogan told private broadcaster CNN Turk during an interview.

He said Turkey would not be deploying its own combat forces. "Right now, we will have different units serving as a combatant force," he said, without giving details on who and how many the fighters would be, as well as where they would come from.

The president said Turkey's objective was "not to fight", but "to support the legitimate government and avoid a humanitarian tragedy".

He said: "Our soldiers' duty there is coordination. They will develop the operation center there. Our soldiers are gradually going right now."

■ 'Aim to avoid humanitarian tragedy'

Libya was plunged into chaos after the toppling and killing of Muammar Gaddafi in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising. Since 2014, it has been split into rival eastern and western administrations.

The GNA currently controls Tripoli in northwestern Libya, and a parallel administration is holding the east of the oil-rich country, supported by Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA).

Last week, Haftar had called on Libyans to take up arms in response to Turkey's expected military move. "We accept the challenge and declare jihad and a call to arms," he said 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".

The GNA and Turkey signed security and maritime agreements in late November last year, opening the path to the Turkish troop deployment, and angering Mediterranean countries including Greece and Cyprus who also seek to exploit energy resources in the region.

On Saturday, Libya's eastern-based parliament voted unanimously against the deals the Tripoli-based government signed with Ankara.

On the same day, at least 30 people were killed and 33 others wounded in an attack on a military academy in the Libyan capital, according to the authorities on Tripoli.

Turkey condemned the attack and called for international steps to achieve a ceasefire.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Italian Foreign Minister's reaction to Trump's recent adventures

"Those who still believe that violence is the way forward are stuck in the past or have not yet understood the lessons from history. And, what's worse, it is exposing all Italians to a danger of retaliation". This is what Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio writes on Facebook talking about the situation in Iran and Libya.

"Now it is no longer the time to risk death, terrorism, unsustainable migratory waves" he went on. "Now is the time to bet on dialogue, diplomacy and political solutions. In the last few days the events concerning Iran and Libya brought us back to memories of a past of war, a past not far away, which brought us destruction, deaths, fear. And that renews a fear that none of us would like to live.



In both scenarios, even with all the relative differences and specificities, the beacon that guides us is always and only one simple truth: war generates another war, violence calls other violence, death another death". "5 Star Movement - he wrote - has this truth very clear.

Many conflicts, many wrong choices, starting from the war in Libya in 2011 and from the mistakes already made in Iraq, tell us what we must not repeat. Sacred human lives, civil and military, terrorist attacks, migratory flows of desperate people who have no choice, and which Italy cannot manage. Any action that leads to a worsening of these situations is not the right answer".

(Source: Ansa)

Egypt to meet four European countries on Libya crisis

Egypt announced Monday that it will hold a meeting with four European Mediterranean countries about developments in neighboring Libya after Turkey began deploying troops in the war-torn North African nation.

The talks – to be held in Cairo on Wednesday – will bring together foreign ministers from France, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, Egypt's foreign ministry said.

The ministers will tackle the "rapid de-

velopments" in Libya and "ways to push efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement" between rival administrations there, a statement said.

Libya has seen an escalation of the turmoil that has gripped the oil-rich country since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia back strongman general Khalifa

Haftar, who launched an offensive in April to capture Tripoli from the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA).

On Sunday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that soldiers had begun deploying to Libya to shore up the GNA following its request for military support.

Cairo considers a military intervention in Libya a "matter of Egyptian national security" and has vowed to quash efforts

seeking "to control" over its neighbor.

It has also slammed maritime and military deals signed between Ankara and Tripoli in November as "illegitimate".

Relations between Egypt and Turkey have been strained since general-turned-president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi led the 2013 military overthrow of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, whom Ankara supported.

(Source: AFP)

Democrats to introduce House resolution limiting Trump's military actions against Iran

The House will vote on a resolution to restrict Donald Trump's ability to wage war against Iran, Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi has said, arguing that Congress must prevent the White House from endangering American lives.

In a letter to her Democratic colleagues, Pelosi stressed that Congress had a "responsibility" to stop a "serious escalation" with Tehran that could endanger U.S. diplomats and service members. She said the House will introduce a vote on a War Powers resolution later this week that aims to "limit the President's military actions regarding Iran."

The bill "reasserts Congress's long-established oversight responsibilities by mandating that if no further Congressional action is taken, the Administration's military hostilities with regard to Iran cease within 30 days."

The top-ranking Democrat said the resolution was necessary in order to reassert Congressional oversight over war powers, especially since Trump did not consult lawmakers before carrying out a drone strike that killed Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds Force.

Trump notified Congress on Sunday that he would "quickly and fully strike back, and perhaps in a disproportionate manner" should Tehran strike "any person or target". The U.S. president also warned that "brand new" American military hardware worth trillions of dollars would head Iran's way in the event of retaliatory action.

(Source: RT)

Beijing slams Washington for fueling tensions in Middle East with 'military interventionism'

China has accused the U.S. of having a destabilizing presence in the Middle East, describing growing animosity between the United States and Iran as a threat to regional security.

The U.S. should not misuse its military power, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said during a press briefing on Monday. He also called on Washington and Tehran to show restraint and avoid an escalation of tensions in the wake of a U.S. drone strike that killed General Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force.

"Power politics are neither popular nor sustainable," Shuang added, as quoted by Reuters.

China has been highly critical of the targeted strike, describing the assassination as a violation of international norms and deeply damaging to regional stability. In a telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Washington was "abusing force," and promised that Beijing will hold an objective and fair position in order to help improve the situation in the Middle East.

(Source: RT)

Guaido blocked from Congress in crucial vote

Luis Parra was sworn-in as the new speaker of Venezuela's National Assembly on Sunday after security forces prevented opposition leader Juan Guaido and other MPs from entering the building, prompting them to hold their own election for chief of Congress.

Guaido was re-elected speaker in that vote, which took place at a newspaper office hours after Parra, a rival of Guaido, had been installed in the role.

"ALERT! Parliamentary coup. Without votes, nor a quorum PSUV (the ruling party) deputies are trying to swear in a false leadership," the opposition said on Twitter.

Guaido was seen clashing with security forces while the session took place.

"I do not understand how they prohibit access to the parliamentarians that the people have chosen," Guaido said. "Let the whole world see how they've militarised access."

Parra was shown on local media taking part in what seemed to be an improvised swearing-in-ceremony after being elected with the votes of the ruling Socialist Party (PSUV) and defectors from the opposition coalition.

"Here today it is demonstrated that the constitutional process has a time, a date and a specific place, those excuses of not attending... I think we left them behind," Parra told state television.

He rejected claims from Guaido's team that the correct protocol had not been observed.

"This institution is not Juan Guaido, who represents the past, it's a [legislative body] with lawmakers that have the right to vote and disagree," he added.

In a televised speech, President Nicolas Maduro acknowledged Parra as speaker saying that parliament had a "new board of directors".

Parra has recently been accused of corruption; allegations he denies.

One video distributed by Guaido's team showed him trying to jump a fence while he was pushed by security forces.

Juan Romero, a member of Venezuela's PSUV party in the state of Zulia said the move only reflected the divisions within the opposition parties.

"This situation will end fragmenting more the current opposition, and shows the failure of a strategy," Romero told Al Jazeera.

"The decision only favours the current government of Nicolas Maduro, who obtains a break from the current political impasse, and only weakens further Guaido and his party," he added.

(Source: al Jazeera)

Fan dies after attack from PAOK fans, hit by car

A Bulgarian man has died in Thessaloniki after being attacked by fans of Greek football club PAOK and hit by a car.

Greek police said the 28-year-old victim and two Bulgarian friends were attacked Sunday afternoon by an estimated 15-20 PAOK fans, armed with clubs.

The attack took place near a parking lot in the center of the northern Greek city. The Bulgarians were beaten and the victim fell into the road where he was run over by a car. The other two Bulgarians have non-life-threatening injuries, police said.

Police are looking for the driver and are waiting for an autopsy to determine whether the victim was killed when run over by the car or that he was already dead when struck by the vehicle.

Police have detained 14 people in connection with the incident. The three Bulgarians are fans of Bulgarian league club Botev Plovdiv, whose supporters are linked with Thessaloniki-based team Aris -- PAOK's biggest rival in the city.

On Saturday, the three had attended the Aris-PAOK derby in which Aris beat league-leading PAOK 4-2.

(Source: ESPN)

Harrell's 34 points pace Clippers NBA win over Knicks

Montrezl Harrell scored 34 points off the bench to lead a trio of Los Angeles Clippers players scoring more than 30 in a bounce-back NBA victory Sunday over New York.

Paul George and Lou Williams added 32 points each as the Clippers won 135-132, erasing the sour taste left by a home loss to the lowly Memphis Grizzlies 24 hours earlier.

It marked the first time in the club's 50-year history that three players scored at least 30 points.

"History is good, I guess," said Clippers coach Doc Rivers, although he was still dissatisfied with his team's defensive effort.

"Have we ever won a game where the other team shot 57 percent -- 132 points, I'm more upset about that than happy," Rivers said.

However, he found something to like in the Clippers' fightback from a 16-point first-quarter deficit.

Reserves Harrell and Williams played a key role in the reversal, Williams scoring 18 points in the second quarter and Harrell 14 as the Clippers took a 76-69 halftime lead.

"Our second unit came in, they played defense, they got the stops and then Lou caught fire," said George, who returned to action after missing Saturday's game with a tight left hamstring.

George said he and Patrick Beverley, back after missing three games with a sore right wrist, were inspired by the bench performance. "We knew what we had to do," he said.

George fouled out with 7:06 left to play and the Clippers up by 11. The Knicks promptly scored eight straight points, and New York were again within three after Marcus Morris's floater with 10.4 seconds remaining.

Williams then made two free throws that proved decisive for the Clippers, who improved to 26-12 and are fourth in the Western Conference.

(Source: France 24)

'Corruption, doping cover-up' at International Weightlifting Federation: report

The International Weightlifting Federation and its long-time chief Tamas Ajan have been accused of establishing a "culture of corruption" and doping cover-ups over decades in a German documentary to be aired Sunday.

Prominent weightlifters were rarely subject to tests, while some doping controllers were allegedly taking cash to accept manipulated urine samples, claimed the report by journalists at German broadcaster ARD including Hajo Seppelt, who broke the story on Russia's state doping scandal.

Dorin Balmus, doctor of the Moldovan national weightlifting team, was caught on hidden camera explaining how urine samples could be manipulated -- including by getting lookalikes of athletes to provide the samples.

The undercover team also filmed Thailand's Olympic bronze medalist Rattikan Gulnoi admitting to using steroids when she was 18 years old -- something that could see her stripped of her prize.

Christian Baumgartner, who heads the German federation, told ARD the IWF's chief was to blame.

"Ajan stands for a system that has established doping in weightlifting over decades and that has gone off the rails for decades," Baumgartner charged, adding that "a culture of corruption has spread".



Beyond doping, the ARD report also cited documents allegedly showing at least \$5 million in funding flowing from the International Olympic Committee to the IWF were transferred into two Swiss accounts of which only Ajan had oversight.

Hungarian national Ajan, 80, has been in the IWF's management since 1970, taking over as president of the federation in 2000.

In a statement to AFP later Sunday, the IWF said it was examining the allegations made in the broadcast.

"Amid a number of apparent falsehoods, unsubstantiated allegations and disproven rumors dating back to as far as 2008, there does seem to be some fresh information included in the programme which may be of use to the IWF's efforts to promote clean weightlifting and protect clean sport," said the statement.

"The IWF will move very quickly to investigate the issues raised in the show as quickly as possible, and has requested the transcripts and research materials.

"The IWF takes these allegations very seriously and, where appropriate, will consider independent third-party assistance in investigating these matters."

Seppelt and the ARD team was behind a documentary film in 2014 that sparked an official investigation into state doping in Russia that saw it banned from key international sports events.

Anti-doping organization WADA decided on December 9 to ban Russia from participating in major international events for four years, including the 2020 and 2022 Olympic Games and the 2022 World Cup.

(Source: Eurosport)

'Shame on you': Balotelli lashes out in new Italy racism storm

Mario Balotelli lashed out on Sunday after again being targeted by racist insults, this time from Lazio fans after he scored for Brescia in a 2-1 Serie A defeat, telling his tormentors: "Shame on you".

"A defeat that hurts but we will come back stronger and we are on the right track," the 29-year-old Italy international wrote on Instagram.

"Lazio fans that were today at the stadium SHAME ON YOU! #saynotoracism."

Balotelli struck the first goal after 18 minutes at Brescia's Stadio Mario Rigamonti before title-chasers Lazio hit back with a Ciro Immobile double.

But the game was overshadowed by insulting chants aimed at the former Manchester City and Liverpool player.

"It's already the second time," Balotelli told referee Gianluca Manganiello after half an hour, with the latter replying: "Now I'll take care of it".

Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi gestured in front of the visiting fans to stop the chanting, as an announcement was read over the stadium speakers reminding spectators play would be suspended and their club penalised if they continued.

Brescia fans tried to drown out the insults with whistles and cheering which Balotelli applauded.

Lazio later issued a statement condemning the behaviour of "a very small minority of fans".

"The club confirms once again that it condemns these unjustified excesses and it intends to prosecute those who betray their own sporting passion and cause serious damage to the image of the club and the Biancoceleste team," Lazio said.

In November, Balotelli threatened to walk off the pitch after being the target of monkey chants at Verona, with Inter Milan's Romelu Lukaku, AC Milan's Franck Kessie and Fiorentina's Dalbert also victims of abuse this season.

An anti-racism campaign launched by Serie A featuring three monkeys last month drew widespread criticism and ridicule.

Balotelli picked up where he left off before the winter break pulling clear of Luiz Felipe to volley in his first home goal for Brescia and first of the decade.



He also scored the first goal of the previous decade in January 2010 with Inter Milan.

■ Lazio stretch winning run

However, Lazio still stretched their winning streak to nine consecutive league games to consolidate third place, three points behind leaders Inter Milan and Juventus who play on Monday.

Immobile struck the winner after 91 minutes, having also converted from the penalty spot before the break.

Relegation-threatened Brescia were reduced to 10 men when Andrea Cistana was sent off for a second yellow card after bringing down Felipe Caicedo after 39 minutes.

Japan, Nishioka keep surprises coming at ATP Cup



Yoshihito Nishioka notched his second up-set to start the season after downing world number 26 Nikoloz Basilashvili in straight sets Monday, as injury-hit Japan continued to surprise at the ATP Cup.

The world number 72 won 6-2, 6-3 in Perth to clinch the tie for unbeaten Japan after Go Soeda prevailed over Georgia's Aleksandre Metreveli 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Japan, who whitewashed Uruguay on Saturday, surprisingly top Group B in the 24-nation event despite the withdrawal of injured star Kei Nishikori and Yasutaka Uchiyama, their third best player, before the tournament.

The top eight countries from the round robin go onto a knockout phase in Sydney.

Nishioka, 24, has relished the extra responsibility, having beaten Basilashvili and world number 45 Pablo Cuevas, who he thrashed 6-0, 6-1 on Saturday.

"I think I played my best tennis and very happy about this," he said of his win against the Georgian.

The left-handed Nishioka's pinpoint ac-

curacy rattled Basilashvili, who constantly misfired in an error-strewn first set before settling.

Basilashvili broke in the third game of the second set but was unable to consolidate, as Nishioka overcame service struggles of his own to prevail in straight sets.

In the earlier match, veteran Soeda was made to work by Metreveli, who rebounded after a horror debut at the ATP level when he failed to win a game against Spanish world number nine Roberto Bautista Agut on Saturday.

Metreveli, ranked 678, was broken early before finally getting on the board in the fourth game to ignite his confidence. He then broke back before dictating with aggressive ground-strokes to claim his first set on tour.

Both players struggled to hold serve in a see-saw start to the second set, but Soeda levelled the match after taking advantage of Metreveli's susceptible forehand and cruised from there.

(Source: AFP)

Solskjaer tells Lingard to use social media less



Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has told Jesse Lingard to tone down his use of social media in a bid to get the midfielder back to his best.

Lingard did not score or assist a goal in the league in 2019 and has lost his place in the England squad ahead of this summer's European Championship.

"Jesse has had his ups and downs as I've spoken about before, but against City and Tottenham, they are examples of how important he can be for us," Solskjaer told a news conference ahead of their Carabao Cup semifinal first leg against Manchester City.

"We want him back scoring and making assists. No one who runs as much as Jess, he's a great trigger in the pressing and lively, bubbly character.

"I don't think you see as much social media from Jesse as you used to. He's got his head down and working hard and getting back to the Jesse I knew.

"It's part of being a Man United player,

how you come across and it's important that you do give up yourself in a positive way and it's football-related.

"I do speak to players about how they portray themselves. I don't have these social media things but it's a different generation."

Meanwhile, Solskjaer is facing a crucial 36 hours as he sweats over the fitness of four key players ahead of the clash with City.

Anthony Martial, Lingard and Luke Shaw all missed the the FA Cup tie with Wolves on Saturday while Harry Maguire left Molineux limping heavily after picking up an injury in the first half.

"We're going to give them as much time as we can, that's the most correct and honest answer I can give," Solskjaer said. "Some of them are still not ready.

"If it was a game today [Monday], I'm not sure they could perform at their best but there is another 36 hours until I give them the team."

(Source: Soccer.net)

Ancelotti fumes as Everton flop against Liverpool kids

Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti is planning an immediate inquest into his side's embarrassing FA Cup defeat against Liverpool's youngsters.

Ancelotti's team wasted a golden opportunity to win at Anfield for the first time since 1999 as 18-year-old Curtis Jones fired Liverpool to a 1-0 win in the third round on Sunday.

Liverpool-born Jones, 18, is a graduate of Liverpool's youth academy and he was joined by four other raw rookies in Jurgen Klopp's line-up.

Klopp made nine changes, fielding a starting line-up which cost £43.9 million, while Everton's team cost in the region of £222 million.

Ancelotti had sent out a virtually full-strength team, but they wasted a host of chances in the first half before surrendering limply after the break.

Everton are without a win against Liverpool since 2010, making this a bitter first taste of the Merseyside derby for former Napoli boss Ancelotti, who is ready to discuss the tame display with his players.

"I am not used to speaking to the players after the game but I am going to speak to them about this," Ancelotti said.

"I think in the second half we were not able to keep the right ideas on the pitch as we did in the first half, when we had the opportunity to score.



"The fact we didn't score in the first half affected the performance in the second half, which was not good enough."

It was suggested to Ancelotti that Everton had a mental block when it came to games at Anfield, but he said it was a matter of losing intensity in the second half.

"The line-up of Liverpool didn't affect our idea. It was to play a good game. We knew Liverpool would put fresh players in and the intensity could be high," Ancelotti said.

"The defeat arrived because we were not able to keep a high intensity in the second. We lost energy and confidence."

After a performance which former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher described as the worst derby display at Anfield in 35 years, the difficult situation Ancelotti has inherited was laid bare.

"We are going to speak all together and find a solution to try to improve the team," Ancelotti said of potential moves in the transfer window.

Meanwhile, Klopp was delighted as his decision to rest the majority of his injury-hit squad paid rich dividends.

The runaway Premier League leaders look well set for the future judging by the youngsters' vibrant effort and Klopp said: "I saw a sensationally good performance from a not-very-experienced team.

"A lot players for the first time playing on this stage in front of this crowd and this type of opponent. It was outstanding. I loved each second of the game."

Taking a swipe at pundits who said his selection disrespected the Cup, Klopp added: "We never take the cup for granted.

"I would love to see a few people and ask them what they thought about the line-up, and all these bad things about me and the FA Cup and no respect."

(Source: Mirror)

Volleyball teams to start Olympics journey

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Iranian men's and women's volleyball teams will start the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) 2020 Olympic Qualification Tournament on Tuesday.

The AVC Men's competition will kick off in Jiangmen, China – eight teams, divided into two round-robin pools leading up to crossed semifinals and a final – to stamp one Olympic visa on January 12.

In Pool A, hosts China, most recently finishing fifth at home at Beijing 2008, are targeting their third Olympic appearance, in the company of reigning 2019 Asian champions Iran, who finished fifth at Rio 2016, their only Olympic participation so far, as well as Kazakhstan and Chinese Taipei, who have never made it to the Games as such.

Iran will start the campaign with a match against Chinese Taipei on Jan. 7 and meet Kazakhstan and China in the following days.

"We have an important tournament ahead and know that it will be difficult task because all participant teams will take part at the competition looking to book a berth at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics," Iran coach Igor Kolakovic told the reporters in Tehran.

"We have a lot of faith in our team and are hopeful of winning a berth at the Olympics, that's why we are here. We have no choice but to win a place at Tokyo," the Montenegrin coach stated.

2019 Asian Championship runners-up Australia, who ranked eighth at home at Sydney 2000 and played at two more editions of the Games afterwards, lead the way in Pool B, with eight-time Olympic participants Korea as their main contender. India and Qatar will also start the Jiangmen tournament in Pool B, hoping to book Olympic tickets for the first time in history.

Even so, the Iranian young women team have a difficult task in the competition in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

Iran have been drawn in Pool B along with Indonesia, South Korea and Kazakhstan.

Pool A consists of Chinese Taipei, Australia and Thailand. The top two of each pool advance to crosswise semifinals, followed by the deciding match and the winners will qualify



to the 2020 women's Olympic volleyball tournament.

"I believe in these young players because we're talking about a generation that can make a change in our volleyball. We are going to improve with our young and experienced players. I have already said this is our second team. The team have an average age of 20 years and average height of 181 centimeters," Mitra Shabanian said

before travelling to Thailand.

"We've finished in seventh and eighth places in the previous editions but I hope that we come in a better place in the near future. They are here to make it happen. If we discover our talented players and they get investment at just the right time, I have no doubt we can shine in the continent in the future," she added.

Jahanbakhsh wins Brighton's Performance of the Month for December



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Alireza Jahanbakhsh won Performance of the Month for December for his display against AFC Bournemouth in English Premiere League.

The Iranian winger found the back of the net just three minutes into the match, ending his 18-month goalscoring drought.

Jahanbakhsh, a club-record £17million signing last summer, couldn't control his emotions after scoring goal.

The midfielder beat off competition from teammates Neal Maupay and Aaron Mooy to claim the award, following his first goal for the club against the Cherries

at the end of the month.

Jahanbakhsh, who netted Albion's fastest-ever Premier League goal for the Seagulls against Eddie Howe's side, received 65% of the vote, brightonand-hovealbion.com reported.

Jahanbakhsh's goal was added to by Aaron Mooy after the restart, as the Australian also notched his first goal for the club in the game to seal a 2-0 win to round off 2019 for Graham Potter's men.

Jahanbakhsh is the third Iranian player to score in Premier League history (also Ashkan Dejagah and Andranik Teymourian) and the first since Dejagah in April 2014.

Sportspersons attend in commander's funeral



S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — The numbers of sportspersons attended in the funeral of the commander of the IRGC Quds Force Major General Qassem Soleimani.

Iran's Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Masoud Soltanifar, Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) Reza Salehi Amiri, NOC secretary general Keykavous Saeidi, Director General of federations' common affairs at Iranian Ministry of Sports Mohammad Shervin Asbaghian, Persepolis players Mehdi Torabi and Mohammad Ansari and retired futsal player Vahid Shamsaei were among the attendees. Commander of the IRGC Quds Force

Major General Qassem Soleimani was martyred in an airstrike at Baghdad's international airport on Friday morning.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei declared three days of public mourning in the country. Iran's Ministry of Sport had announced that the all competition which are scheduled for Saturday and Sunday were canceled.

General Soleimani was at frontline positions in battles against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

General Soleimani and Deputy Commander of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (Hashd al-Shaabi) Abu Mahdi Al-Mohandes, who were separately leaving Baghdad airport in two cars were targeted and assassinated early hours of morning on Friday.

Ghaedi backs Iran to deliver from day one

In-form Islamic Republic of Iran winger Mehdi Ghaedi believes his side are primed and ready to perform at the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020, despite being drawn to play holders Uzbekistan in their Group C opener on Thursday

While Iran are hopeful of ending a long-standing Olympic qualification drought, Uzbekistan are defending the title they won in China two years ago, with six players from the successful 2018 squad selected again this time around.

With Korea Republic and China PR also looming in one of the tournament's most imposing groups, the Hamid Estili-led side has little margin for error, but Ghaedi is confident Team Melli Omid will produce from day one.

"The first game is always really difficult, it's true," said the 21-year-old, who has lit up the first half of the season for Tehran giants FC Esteghlal.

"We know Uzbekistan very well, and we know that they are a really good team. We played with them many times in other age groups and at the Under-23 level, we are sure they are one of the best teams in Asia.

"We want to start the championship very strongly, because we are Iran and we believe in ourselves. You will see our best performance from the first match."

While denting Uzbekistan's title defense



is Iran's immediate goal, the big picture of their Thailand 2020 campaign is focused on ending their much-discussed absence from the Olympic Games.

Iran have always been one of Asia's footballing heavyweights, but it was 44 long years ago that a squad featuring Ali Parvin and Nasser Hejazi reached the last eight in Montreal, with generations of outstanding players trying, and failing to return to the

Olympic stage since.

Ghaedi's cohort require a top three finish in Thailand to become Iran's new generation of footballing Olympians, and while an Asian title is up for grabs over the coming weeks, Tokyo 2020 remains at the forefront of their minds.

"The first goal we had from day one was to qualify for the Olympics, and that is our first target in this tournament." Ghaedi revealed.

"We know its 44 years since we last qualified for the Olympic Games in football, but it's a new chance (to do so) and we are a new team. We'll do our best."

While Iran's youngsters carry the weight of the past into the tournament to come, the precociously talented Ghaedi has much more reason to be excited about his future.

Sidelined by a long-term injury for much of 2018, Ghaedi enjoyed a stunning end to 2019, producing eight goals and an avalanche of assists in the first half of Esteghlal's league campaign.

Those performances have seen Ghaedi's name linked with European clubs, and the player believes the influence of Italian boss Andrea Stramaccioni, who himself spoke of his joy at having worked with the youngster after departing Esteghlal last month, was a major factor in his form.

"I'd like to say thank you to Mr Stramaccioni, because he really helped me this season," Ghaedi said.

"He really trusted in me, and that was so important. With this trust and this help I became a better and better player every day and in every game.

It isn't just on the park that life has been going well for Esteghlal's number 10, who arrived in Thailand having celebrated his wedding in Tehran just a week ago.

(Source: the-afc)

Ahad Sheikhlari named Machine Sazi coach

S P O R T S **TEHRAN** — Ahad Sheikhlari has been named as new head coach of Iranian football team Machine Sazi.

The Tabriz based football club parted company with Rasoul Khatibi last week.



Sheikhlari had been appointed as interim coach of Tractor after Mustafa Denizli left the team.

Sheikhlari started his coaching career in 1999 as assistant coach in Tractor.

He has also headed Shahr-dari Tabriz, Mes Sungun and Shahr-dari Ardabil.

Machine Sazi sit ninth in Iran football league.

Match officials appointed for Matchday One

The Asian Football Confederation has announced the 14 match officials for the AFC U23 Championship Thailand 2020 opening matches on Wednesday.

Iraq, the 2013 champions, will take on Australia at the Thammasat Stadium in Pathum Thani before hosts Thailand lock horns with debutants Bahrain at the Rajamangala Stadium in Bangkok.

Four China PR officials have been appointed for the Iraq-Australia match - referee Fu Ming, assistant referees Shi Xiang and Cao Yi and Video Assistant Referee Ma Ning.

Ma Ning will be joined by assistants Liu Kwok Man of Hong Kong and Korea Republic's Ko Hyung-jin while Sri Lanka's Hettikankanamge Crishantha Dilan Perera is the fourth official.

Six Japanese officials have been selected for the Thailand-Bahrain match - Ryuji Sato and assistants Hiroshi Yamauchi and Jun Mihara alongside fourth official Ahmed Abu Bakar Said Al Kaf from Oman.

Hirokyuki Kimura of Japan will be the Video Assistant Referee, and he will be assisted by compatriots Jumpei Iida and Minoru Tojo.

Each referee will be accompanied by two assistant referees, and receive support from the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system, which is set to make its full tournament debut across all three cities in Thailand - Bangkok, Songkhla and Buriram.

The referees will be playing various roles throughout the tournament, including VAR and Assistant VAR appointments. (Source: the-afc)

Persepolis to play Al Shahania in winter camp

TASNIM — Persepolis of Iran will play a friendly match with Qatari club Al Shahania in their winter training camp.

The match has been scheduled for January 17 in Al-Shahania.

Persepolis were scheduled to hold their camp at the Aspire Zone in Doha but failed to arrange a time.

The Iranian team will be seen in action in the 2020 AFC Champions League in February where it will face Al Taawoun of Saudi Arabia, Al Duhail of Qatar and Sharjah FC of United Arab Emirates in the group stages.

Al Shahaniya Sports Club are a Qatari sports club based in Al Shahaniya, a town 20 km from the capital Doha.

Serena, Wozniacki team up to advance in Auckland doubles

Serena Williams and Caroline Wozniacki teamed up in the doubles for the first time to beat Japanese pair Nao Hibino and Makoto Ninomiya 6-2 6-4 at the Auckland Classic on Monday.

Wozniacki is set to retire after the Australian Open later this month and Williams said she wanted to partner the Dane before she hung up her racket.

"I had to play with her before she retires," the 38-year-old Williams said after the win saw the unseeded pair advance to the quarter-finals, where they could face the top seeds Caroline Dolehide and Johanna Larsson.

The Japanese duo struggled to deal with Williams' powerful serve in the opening stages before they got the measure of the American veteran to break her once.

But Williams and Wozniacki, who looked relaxed throughout the match and even found the time to joke with each other, continued to press in the second set and wrapped up the match in 71 minutes.

Williams and Wozniacki begin their singles campaigns at Auckland on Tuesday.

In Monday's singles matches, French eighth seed Caroline Garcia rallied to beat American Taylor Townsend 5-7 6-3 7-5 in a match that lasted over two-and-a-half hours.

American teenager Coco Gauff, the youngest player in the draw at 15, saw off the challenge of last year's semi-finalist Viktoria Kuzmova to advance with an impressive 6-3 6-1 victory in 61 minutes.

Sixth seed Rebecca Peterson fell to Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek 7-6(7) 7-6(5).

(Source: Reuters)

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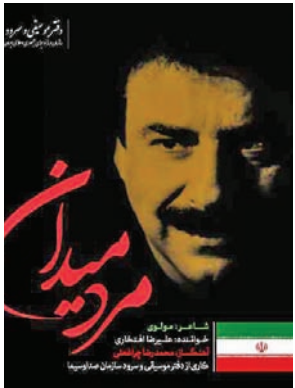
GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

The time to depart (for the next world) is near.

Imam Ali (AS)

Vocalist Alireza Eftekhari releases song in memory of Martyr Soleimani

CULTURE TEHRAN — Vocalist Alireza Eftekhari released a song to express his sympathy over the martyrdom of commander Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.



The song titled “The Man of the Battlefield” was set to music by Mohammadreza Charaghali. The song has been composed based on verses from a poem by Persian mystic Molana Jalal ad-Din Rumi. At its end, the recording has a voice-over of Soleimani reciting the verses in a meeting. The song has been recorded at Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting. The Qud Force commander and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces commander Abdu Mahdi al-Muhandis along with a number of their companions were martyred in a U.S. air raid in Baghdad last Friday.

“1917” upsets Hollywood awards season as Globes host Gervais goes for broke

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (Reuters) — World War One movie “1917” and “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood”, set in 1960s Tinseltown, won the top movie prizes at the Golden Globes on Sunday on a night packed with upsets and hot-button issues at the start of Hollywood’s awards season.

“1917” was named best drama and took best director, beating presumed front-runners “The Irishman” and “Marriage Story”, both from Netflix Inc. The nostalgic “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood” from Sony Pictures won for best comedy/ musical, and had the biggest Golden Globe haul, with three awards.

Martin Scorsese’s high-profile and costly gangster epic for Netflix went home empty-handed on a disappointing night for the streaming service that could affect its Oscar chances in February.

Netflix took home just one Golden Globe in the movie race, for Laura Dern’s supporting role as a ruthless divorce lawyer in “Marriage Story”.

Apple Inc’s new Apple TV+ streaming service, in its first award show, failed to make good on any of its three nominations for “The Morning Show”.

British director Sam Mendes was named best director for his immersive “1917” from Universal Pictures, a dark horse with no big names that arrived in U.S. movie theaters only 10 days ago.

“That is a big surprise”, said a stunned Mendes. “I really hope this means people will turn up and see it.”

Joaquin Phoenix, who played a terrifying “Joker”, and Renee Zellweger, who portrayed Judy Garland in “Judy”, took the drama movie actor honors. Taron Egerton (“Rocketman”) and Awkwafina (“The Farewell”) were first-time winners in the comedy/musical field.

“We all know there is no ... competition between us,” Phoenix told his fellow nominees, praising their “beautiful, mesmerizing work.”

Tarantino won for the screenplay of his love letter to the industry, “Once Upon a Time in Hollywood”, while Brad Pitt was a popular winner for playing a laid-back stunt double in the film.

“I wanted to bring my mom”, quipped Pitt. “But any women I stand next to, they say I am dating.”

British comedian and actor Ricky Gervais, hosting the awards ceremony for a fifth time, threw caution to the wind with expletives and jabs about the dominance of streaming platforms, diversity and Hollywood’s sexual misconduct scandal, which drew mostly nervous laughter in the room of A-list celebrities.

Gervais noted that the room was packed with entertainment executives. “They are all terrified of Ronan Farrow. He’s coming for you,” he said, referring to the American journalist whose reports helped uncover the sexual misconduct scandal that has swept Hollywood over the past two years.

Gervais was not the only celebrity at the boozy dinner to get political.

Michelle Williams, winning limited TV series actress for “Fosse/Verdon”, gave an impassioned speech about reproductive rights and encouraged women to vote.

She said she had built a career of her choosing and “wouldn’t have been able to do this without employing a woman’s right to choose. To choose when to have my children and with whom.”

Others, including absent winner Russell Crowe, for television series “The Loudest Voice”, spoke of the devastating bushfires in Australia and the dangers of global warming.

Iranian Photographers Center launches contest on martyr Soleimani’s funeral

A R T TEHRAN — The Iranian Photographers Center has launched a contest named “My Commander” to select photos that will best represent the funeral procession of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad.

Submissions will be competing in three sections dedicated to professional photographers, ordinary people and young adults, Ehsan Baqeri, the director of the center, said in a press release on Monday.

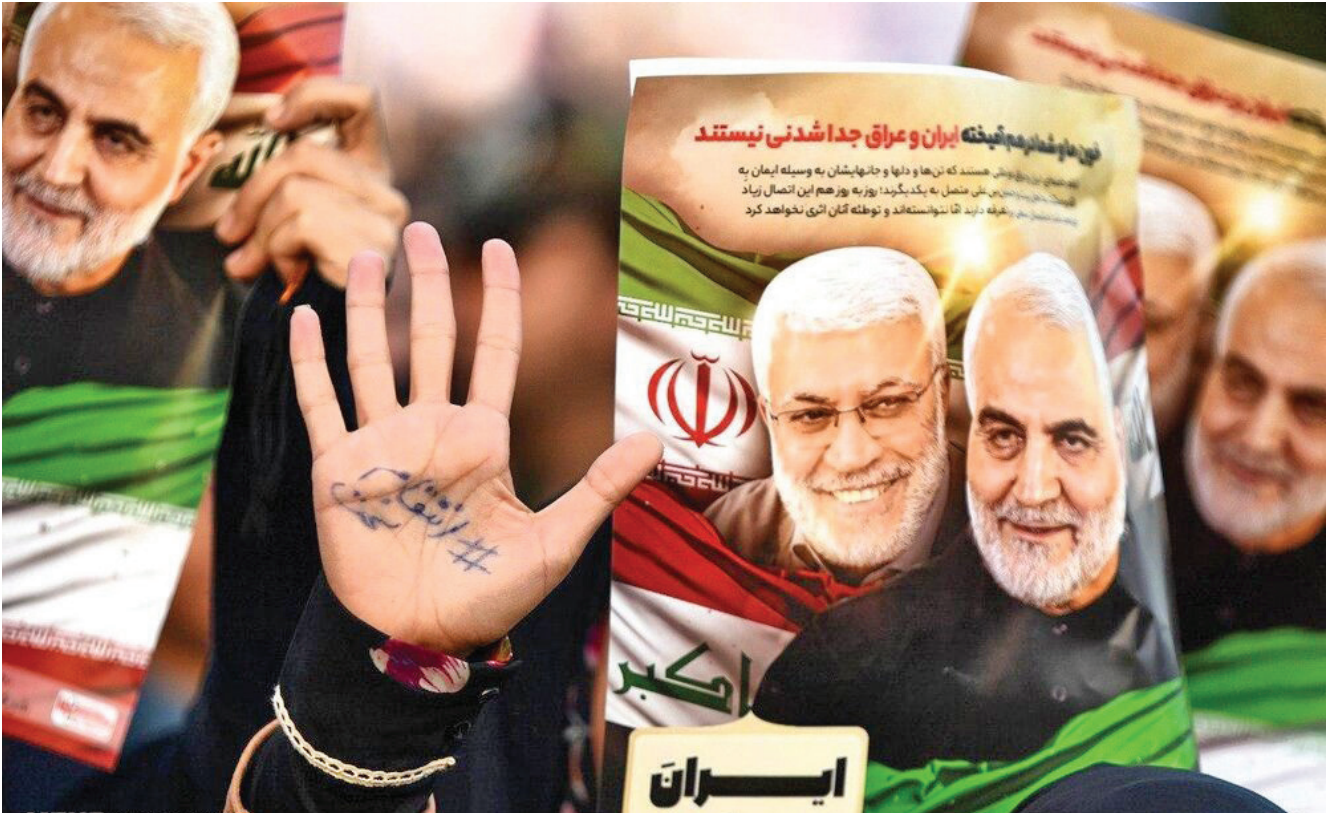
Photos depicting any aspects of the nationwide funeral ceremonies in Ahvaz, Mashhad, Tehran, Qom and Kerman are allowed to compete in the contest, he added.

Photographers Farhad Soleimani and Ahmad Nateqi are among the members of the jury for the official section of the contest.

Baqeri also said that the ceremony will surely be remembered as a great national gathering and added, “The sad feelings of people these days, their love, passion and grieves should be recorded.”

The contest has been organized in collaboration with the Association of Revolution and Sacred Defense Photographers.

The selected photos will be put on view in an exhibition during April.



An Iranian woman shows her palm bearing the slogan #Hard Revenge during the funeral procession for Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Ahvaz on January 5, 2020. (Mehr/Mohammad-Hassan Hayavi)

Iranian writers send letter to UN warning of U.S. threats to global peace



A logo for the Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards.

A R T TEHRAN — A group of Iranian writers has sent a letter to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, warning of the U.S. threats to the world following the assassination of commander Qassem Soleimani and a number his companions in a U.S. military attack in Baghdad.

“Our country has been threatened by the country that claims to seek peace and security,” they wrote in the letter published by the 12th Jalal Al-e Ahmad Literary Awards, Iran’s most lucrative literary prize.

“Killing of the officials of a country by another country for any reason is not acceptable, however, one of our popular officials has been martyred by the U.S. for a lame excuse and this is a serious threat to peace and security in our country. Threatening a country with killing its

official would institutionalize a dangerous and inhumane treatment and, in fact, imperil people and the security in other countries,” they added.

Addressing the UN secretary-general, the writers noted, “This is not a complaint. This letter carries the comments of those writers who are respectful of their countries and people’s lives and the humane international regulations, and based on this respect, support any appropriate response from their government to any threat from any country.”

The assassination of Quds Force commander Lieutenant General Soleimani came as a great shock to the cultural communities in Iran and abroad and they condemned the U.S. action in statements and on posts published on social networks.

“The Grudge” kicks off 2020 box office as “Rise of Skywalker” rules again

LOS ANGELES, (Variety.com) — Sony and Screen Gems’ “The Grudge” ignited the 2020 box office, scaring up \$11.3 million in domestic ticket sales over the weekend.

“The Grudge”, the first new movie to open nationwide this year, was scorned by audiences and critics alike, who branded the reboot with an F CinemaScore and a “rotten” 18% on Rotten Tomatoes. But horror mavens are a demographic hardly dissuaded by reviews. Those receipts are a solid result given the R-rated horror film’s \$10 million budget and were able to crack the top five on box office charts, though ultimately not enough to push past holiday holdovers.

Sam Raimi produced “The Grudge”, a remake of the 2004 movie starring Sarah Michelle Gellar. Nicolas Pesce directed the latest revival, bringing on actors Andrea Riseborough, Demian Bichir, John Cho and Betty Gilpin to take on the cursed supernatural force that wreaks havoc on all who encounter it. Despite its middling reception, the studio hopes “The Grudge” remains a draw throughout January as the lone option catering to moviegoers itching for a scare.

Disney’s “Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker” easily stayed put atop box office charts for the third consecutive weekend, collecting another \$34.5 million for a domestic tally of \$450 million. J.J.

Abrams’ final chapter in the sequel trilogy is rapidly approaching the coveted billion-dollar milestone as the tentpole surpasses \$919 million after 19 days in theaters.

Sony commanded the next two spots as holdovers “Jumanji: The Next Level” and “Little Women” remain strong. The Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart-led sequel pulled in \$26.5 million in its fourth weekend of release, a solid showing on par with the film’s second outing ahead of Christmas. “Jumanji” recently surpassed the \$200 million mark in North America, with ticket sales at \$236 million. Greta Gerwig’s “Little Women” remake generated \$13.5 million, pushing its domestic total to an impressive \$60 million. Disney’s “Frozen 2” rounded out the top five, bringing in \$12 million. The sequel to 2013’s “Frozen” has generated a dazzling \$450 million in the U.S. and \$1.325 billion worldwide, making it the highest-grossing animated movie in history.

Holiday leftovers including Lionsgate’s “Knives Out” and A24’s “Uncut Gems” also continue to exceed expectations. “Knives Out”, Rian Johnson’s murder mystery, pocketed \$9 million over the weekend, boosting its domestic haul to \$130 million. Meanwhile, the Saffdie Brothers’ suspense thriller “Uncut Gems” scored \$7.8 million for an impressive tally of \$36.8 million in North America.

Sculptor Nader Qashqai to make bust of commander Soleimani



Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

A R T TEHRAN — Sculptor Nader Qashqai has said that he will be making a bust of Quds Force chief Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

“I think it will become ready before the 40th day of mourning for the martyrdom of the commander,” Qashqai told the Persian service of Honaronline on Monday.

“After the commander’s martyrdom, I felt I wanted to make an artwork in his memory, and when the Art Bureau proposed to me that I should make the bust I warmly welcomed the idea,” he added.

“The strength and power in the portrait of the commander showcases all the aspects of his character,” he noted and said, “His attitudes towards the people of Iran and his bravery in the war and his desire to reconstruct the war-stricken regions in the country are outstanding. His loyalty has been proven for all the people.”

FA Cup clash features “Justice League” film fans’ push for “SnyderCut”

LONDON (Reuters) — English soccer fans are used to seeing heroes emerge in the historic FA Cup, but may not often witness the sport cross over with the world of Superman and Batman as it did on Sunday in Tottenham Hotspur’s third-round clash with Middlesbrough.

Supporters at the match at Middlesbrough’s Riverside stadium, along with millions watching across the world, would have seen digital billboards around the ground light up with the words #ReleaseTheSnyderCut in designated minutes during play.

The slogan is part of a campaign to pressure Warner Bros to release director Zack Snyder’s cut of the movie “Justice League,” which features major characters from the DC comic book universe such as Superman, Batman, The Flash and Wonder Woman.

Snyder left the 2017 project in post-production and was replaced by Joss Whedon, who made considerable changes to the film which was released in November that year to mixed reviews.

Fans have since pushed for Snyder’s original cut, whose existence the director has confirmed on social media. Actors from the film, such as Gal Gadot (Wonder Woman), Ben Affleck (Batman) and Jason Momoa (Aquaman) have recently supported the campaign on Twitter and Instagram.

The bust is one of the artworks being created by a number of Iranian artists for a project initiated by the Art Bureau’s Visual Arts Office to commemorate Soleimani, who was martyred in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad last Friday.

About 30 painters, graphic designers and sculptors, including Mehdi Farrokhi, Ahmad Qolizadeh, Kamiar Sadeqi, Shahram Shirzadi, Abbas Ganji, Nasser Seifi and Malek-Dadyar Garusian, are collaborating in the project.

Painter Hassan Ruholamin’s painting “The Apocalyptic Companion of Aba Abdullah”, which depicts Soleimani’s remains being embraced by Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of the Shias, is one of the artworks created for the project.

The artworks are scheduled to be showcased in exhibitions, which will be organized across the country in the near future.