

Trump Celebrates New Decade by Trying to Start World War III



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By William Rivers Pitt, Truthout

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I have maintained a straightforward core operating principle for the last 20 years: If John Bolton is happy, we are all in deep trouble. The assassination on Thursday of Iranian military leader Qassim Suleimani on the orders of Donald Trump has made Bolton — a bloodthirsty neocon war-hawk whose lust for war in Iran is bottomless — a very happy man.

“Congratulations to all involved in eliminating Qassem Soleimani,” Bolton tweeted first thing Friday morning. “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.”

That core operating principle of mine is now three days into its third decade. We are all in deep trouble.

Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani has been a hero in Iran since he organized his own hometown company of soldiers to fight in the Iran-Iraq War that raged from 1980 to 1988. He was made a division commander

before he was 30, moving through the ranks until he became one of the most powerful men in the country. Suleimani commanded the Quds Force of the Iran Revolutionary Guards Corps, a highly-trained cadre who specialize in covert actions and intelligence-gathering outside Iran.

Reports have described Suleimani as the George S. Patton of Iran, a warrior celebrity who was pushed on several occasions to run for president of that nation. From a purely military perspective, Suleimani was Iran's indispensable man, responsible for bolstering Hezbollah in Lebanon, throwing back ISIS forces in Syria, and training Shi'ite militias in Iraq. U.S. military commanders came to know him as a fearsome, highly intelligent enemy during the Iraq War.

Because of all this, Suleimani also made a number of lethal enemies in the region and around the world, which begs the question: If he was so bad, why didn't someone kill him before now? The answer, I fear, is that his enemies judged his absence to be more perilous than his presence — Suleimani was a subtle operator not given to rash decisions — and because killing him could provoke a reaction from Iran that would plunge the region into all-out war.

I guess we're all going to find out for ourselves, because Iran's Shi'ite majority has taken to the streets in sorrowful wrath, and the government of Iran is promising swift vengeance. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has instructed all U.S. citizens in Iraq to flee "immediately." Major U.S. cities have heightened security. At present, some 3,000 more U.S. troops are being rushed to the Middle East.

This attack serves as a nifty distraction from his looming impeachment trial in the Senate. Trying to ascertain Trump's motivations for this attack is like trying to peer into the bottom of a bowl of mud ... or blood. The recent assault on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad by Iran-backed protesters may have spooked him into this rash action; the image of Jimmy Carter wrestling with a hostage crisis during an election year probably loomed large in his — or somebody's — mind.

This attack also serves as a nifty distraction from his looming impeachment trial in the Senate. I am waiting for the moment when Sen. Floopdoodle from Red State America storms the chamber and demands all impeachment proceedings be suspended so the commander-in-chief can focus on our glorious new war in Iran. Frankly, I'm astonished this hasn't happened yet.

Thanks to Donald Trump, this assassination has placed the United States into a de facto state of war with Iran. Airports, sporting events, large public gathering places of any kind in every city in the country, and even the benign skies above Nebraska became fearful places after Thursday night. Well ... more fearful, anyway; the ever-present threat of an angry white man running amok with an AR-15 has already made most ground-bound spaces frightening enough as it is. Now we have this.

If this is the world you want, you've got it with spangles and bunting. If fear, assassinations of major world figures without congressional approval and wars compounded by wars are not what you were hoping for in the new year, now is the time to act. John Bolton got what he has always wanted on Sunday night. When will it be your turn? Let's find out together.

William Rivers Pitt is a senior editor and lead columnist at Truthout. He is also a New York Times and internationally bestselling author of three books: *War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know*, *The Greatest Sedition Is Silence* and *House of Ill Repute: Reflections on War, Lies, and America's Ravaged Reputation*. His fourth book, *The Mass Destruction of Iraq: Why It Is Happening, and Who Is Responsible*, co-written with Dahr Jamail, is available now on Amazon. He lives and works in New Hampshire.



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