

CIA Official ‘Behind Soleimani’s Assassination’ Killed in Downed Plane in Afghanistan?

By [Middle East Monitor](#)

Global Research, January 29, 2020

[Middle East Monitor](#) 28 January 2020

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

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The following report by Middle East Monitor remains to be fully corroborated.

Russian intelligence sources have claimed that Michael D’Andrea, head of CIA operations in Iran and who orchestrated the [assassination](#) of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani, was killed in a US spy plane downed yesterday in Ghazni, Afghanistan.

The plane with US Air Force markings reportedly served as the CIA’s mobile command for D’Andrea, who earned several nicknames including: Ayatollah Mike, the Dark Prince, and the Undertaker. He is one of the most prominent CIA figures in the region, appointed head of the agency’s Iran Mission Centre in 2017. Under his leadership, the agency was perceived to take a more “aggressive stance toward Iran”.

The Taliban claimed to have shot down the plane but have yet to provide evidence, whilst the US has denied the claim but has acknowledged the loss of a Bombardier E-11A plane in central Afghanistan. Graphic images online have already circulated purportedly showing some of the charred remains of those on board.

[#AlFath](#)

Enemy intelligence aircraft crashed in Sado Khelo area of Deh Yak district [#Ghazni](#) noon hours today resulting in all crew & high-ranking CIA members killed.

Wreckage & dead bodies laying at crash site. <https://t.co/DL7qwHpcRe>

— Zabihullah (ذبيح الله م.) (@Zabehulah_M33) [January 27, 2020](#)

Unconfirmed reports that the CIA head of anti-Iran operations, Michael D’Andrea aka Ayatollah Mike, was on board the plane that crashed near Ghazni, Afghanistan this morning.

D’Andrea also masterminded the murder of Imad Mughniyeh, former Hezbollah Chief of Staff, back in 2008.

— Brasco_Aad (@Brasco_Aad) [January 27, 2020](#)

Afghan authorities initially claimed the plane was a state-owned airline, but this was denied by the company, Ariana. Helicopters have been brought down before by the Taliban, but

they are not believed to have the capabilities required to bring down a high-flying aircraft.

It has been speculated that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC) may also have a hand in the incident, especially as anti-aircraft support has previously been given to the Taliban. Additionally, the Afghan Shia Fatimyoun Brigades, who are trained by the IRGC, also have a presence in the country.

CIA Middle East chief, Soleimani Killer and Bin Laden Hunter, dead on Jet in Afghanistan. Tasnim and Mirror told after VT
by Fabio Giuseppe Carlo Carisio for VT iTaly

VERSIONE ORIGINALE IN ITALIANO

The news is so big that we have to write it running the risk of a denial, ...
pic.twitter.com/7Da2jmkHug

— VeteransToday (@veteranstoday) [January 28, 2020](#)

An [exiled](#) Iranian journalist who has written previously for the hard-line *Javan* daily newspaper suggested the IRGC was involved, [tweeting](#): "The American Gulfstream plane was downed in Afghanistan by the Taliban. They say that intelligence officers were on board. This report has not yet been confirmed, but if it is, it is possible that the issue of Iran will also emerge in this case."

Another Iranian journalist who writes for *Mashregh* newspaper, described as having close links to IRGC, [tweeted](#) not long after the news broke out: "We will attack them on the same level as they are attacking us."

Soleimani's successor as head of the IRGC's Quds Force, [Esmail Qaani](#), has established ties in Afghanistan going back to the 1980s. Additionally, the chief commander of the IRGC, General Hossein Salami, [warned](#) that no American military commanders will be safe if the US administration continues to [threaten](#) Iranian commanders.

D'Andrea, who is reportedly a [convert](#) to Islam, doing so in order to marry his Muslim wife, who is from a wealthy family from the Mauritius of Gujarati origins, having met on his first overseas assignment in East Africa, one of the senior directors of her family's company Curumjee Group, has been speculated to [provide cover](#) for CIA operations.

He also oversaw hundreds of drone strikes, which according to [The New York Times](#) "killed thousands of Islamist militants and hundreds of civilians". D'andrea is credited with being the mastermind behind the CIA's notorious "[signature strike](#)" used to kill people based on their [behaviour](#), not identity, subsequently used to determine someone's guilt or likelihood of being a terrorist.

He was central to the post-9/11 interrogation programme and ran the CIA's Counterterrorism Center. Assassinations and torture were [central](#) to his approach. He also oversaw the hunt for Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and was involved in the assassination of Hezbollah member Imad Mughniyah in Damascus, Syria.

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Featured image: US vs Iran, who's going to win the war of influence - Cartoon
[Sabaaneh/MiddleEastMonitor]

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