

Trump Administration had Set a Trap for Soleimani

Soleimani was in Iraq on a diplomatic mission to discuss peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia – talks that had been requested by the Trump administration.

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As we breathe a sigh of relief that, for the moment, a massive escalation of regional tensions in the Middle East has been averted, it is important to raise some simple (though disturbing) questions about the assassination of Iran’s Major General Qassem Soleimani.

Pepe Escobar, a widely respected geopolitical writer, has stated (Jan. 6):

“The bombshell facts were delivered by caretaker Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, during an extraordinary, historic parliamentary session in Baghdad on Sunday [Jan. 5]. Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani had flown into Baghdad on a normal carrier flight, carrying a diplomatic passport. He had been sent by Tehran to deliver, in person, a reply to a message from Riyadh on de-escalation across the Middle East. Those negotiations had been requested by the Trump administration[my emphasis].” [1]

Escobar further explained,

“So Baghdad was officially mediating between Tehran and Riyadh, at the behest of Trump. And Soleimani was a messenger. Adhil Abdul-Mahdi was supposed to meet Soleimani at 8:30 a.m. Baghdad time, last Friday [Jan. 3]. But a few hours before the appointed time, Soleimani died as the object of a targeted assassination at Baghdad airport. Let that sink in – for the annals of 21st century diplomacy.” [2]

So Soleimani was in Iraq on a diplomatic mission to discuss peace between Iran and Saudi Arabia – talks that had been requested by the Trump administration. He was killed by a U.S. pre-dawn air raid on Jan. 3 that also killed Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Escobar emphasized,

“Now, the fact is that the United States government – on foreign soil, as a guest nation – has assassinated a diplomatic envoy who was on an official mission that had been requested by the United States government itself.” [3]

According to Andre Damon and David North of World Socialist Web Site [Jan. 7], Iraqi Prime

Minister Abdul-Mahdi further told the Iraqi Parliament that

“Trump had personally thanked him for his diplomatic efforts, giving the impression that Suleimani was not threatened with harm. And yet, within hours, the Iranian general was dead in what Abdul-Mahdi condemned as a grave violation of Iraqi sovereignty.” [4]

It's hard not to arrive at the conclusion that the Trump administration set a trap for Soleimani in order to conduct a targeted assassination of him in Iraq. Indeed, that it is the stark possibility that news outlet South Front published on Jan. 5, stating with regard to the planned de-escalation talks that “the US supposedly used this initiative to set a trap for the Iranian military commander and assassinate him.” Trump's phone call thanking the Iraqi Prime Minister for the impending de-escalation talks was made “on December 31, after demonstrators stormed the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.” [5]

Rather than address this issue, the Trump administration has attempted to deflect from it in a variety of ways. For example, US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper told CNN (Jan. 7) that “Soleimani was caught red-handed ... one terrorist leader of a terrorist organization meeting with another terrorist leader to synchronize and plan additional attacks on American diplomats, forces or facilities.” [6]

Given that the talks that brought Soleimani to Iraq were intended to focus on de-escalation, such spin seems particularly virulent. But then Esper topped his own spin by further telling CNN,

“What we would like to see is the situation de-escalated and for Tehran to sit down with us and begin a discussion about a better way ahead.” [7]

On January 8, Truthout published an op-ed by Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk and Daniel Ellsberg, who called the assassination of Suleimani “unlawful and provocative.” [8]

However, their op-ed also included this paragraph:

“From all that we now know, General Suleimani had come to Iraq without stealth on a commercial plane. He came to Iraq on a diplomatic peacemaking mission at the invitation of the Baghdad government, and with a meeting scheduled on the following day with the prime minister that was part of an ongoing effort to seek a lessening of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In reaction to major violations of its sovereignty, the Iraqi Parliament has voted to expel U.S. troops from their country. In place of what seemed a promising regional initiative, the assassination of General Suleimani has resulted in an intensification of conflict...” [9]

Why would Chomsky, Falk and Ellsberg ignore reported indications of a trap having been set by the U.S.? If they do not believe what the Iraqi Prime Minister reportedly told the Iraqi Parliament, they should have stated that and explained why not.

Instead, they appear to be manufacturing consent for the Trump administration's spin on the assassination, even as they question its legality and deplore its repercussions.

Arguably, given that everything seems to be on hair-trigger alert, this is the time for more honesty, not less. After all, what country – having been designated an “enemy” by the Trump administration – would want to send any delegates for negotiations somewhere, knowing they might be targeted for assassination?

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Notes

[1] Pepe Escobar, “The Economic Risks of Trump’s Reckless Assassination,” Asia Times, January 6, 2020; republished in Consortium News, January 6, 2020.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Andre Damon and David North, “The US propaganda machine justifies the assassination of Qassem Suleimani,” World Socialist Web Site, January 7, 2020.

[5] “Was Soleimani Framed by Trump? In Baghdad to Receive US Supported ‘De-escalation Proposal’ from Saudi Arabia,” South Front, January 5, 2020; republished in Global Research, January 6, 2020.

[6] Quoted in Zachary Cohan, “Esper says US isn’t looking ‘to start a war with Iran, but we are prepared to finish one’,” CNN, January 7, 2020.

[7] Quoted in Julian Borger and Patrick Wintour, “Iran crisis: missiles launched against US airbases in Iraq,” The Guardian, January 8, 2020.

[8] Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk and Daniel Ellsberg, “Congress Must Forcibly Limit Trump’s Power to Attack Iran,” Truthout, January 8, 2020.

[9] Ibid.

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