



[American Airstrike Kills Top Iranian General](#)

The Pentagon announced late Thursday evening that the United States had carried out an airstrike that killed Iranian General Qassem Soleimani. Soleimani was the commander of the elite Quds Force, the military and security wing of Iran's Revolutionary Guards that operates on foreign soil. He was responsible for much of Iran's policy in the Middle East, and held the second most power in Iranian foreign policy after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. General Soleimani was leaving Baghdad's airport with several members of Iraqi militias when the convoy he was in was hit by a drone strike. U.S. President Trump said the attack was preemptive following intelligence that Soleimani was planning operations against American assets in the region, but Iran's Supreme Leader called the attack a murder and vowed to take revenge.

General Soleimani has led the Quds Force since 1988, and has orchestrated nearly every significant Iranian operation in the Middle East since coming to power. Soleimani helped facilitate the rise of Hezbollah in Lebanon, supported Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Syria's civil war, fought against the Islamic State and Al Qaeda, helped create and train militias in Iraq, Afghanistan, and across the region, and supported the Houthi rebels in the war in Yemen. Soleimani was also implicated in a scheme to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States in Washington, which resulted in him being listed as an international terrorist. The United States and Israel also accuse Soleimani of orchestrating attacks against their personnel in the Middle East through local militias.

Soleimani was Iran's highest ranking general, and was often referred to as Iran's "shadow commander." He was responsible for almost all of Iran's foreign policy decisions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Lebanon, and was said to hold more power in Iran than even the President and Foreign Minister. In response to Soleimani's killing, Iranian leadership declared three days of mourning, and dubbed him a martyr. Khamenei also said that Iran would take revenge, a sentiment that was echoed by President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.

President Trump reacted to the strike by taking to Twitter, and tweeted that General Soleimani "should have been taken out many years ago." In an interview with CNN on Friday morning, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the strike was carried out due to new intelligence that pointed toward Iran escalating tensions in Iraq, which are already on edge after the American embassy in Baghdad was stormed by protestors earlier this week. A further report said that the new intelligence was hinting toward Iranian-backed militias in Iraq kidnapping Americans in the country. This report followed an order from the State Department for all Americans to depart Iraq immediately.

Moving forward, Iranian revenge is almost certain. While it is true that Iran doesn't have the military might to face the United States on a conventional battlefield, Iran has historically not shied away from using covert operations through proxies to hurt the United States. Specifically, attacks on American military personnel throughout the Middle East will almost certainly increase, and Tehran could also employ cyber-attacks to cripple American network infrastructure.