

THE CHRONICLE

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Trump's U.S. airstrike sparks tensions

BY ALGENON CASH

Qassem Soleimani, an Iranian major general in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and commander of its Quds Force, was killed in a targeted U.S. drone strike on January 3 in Baghdad, Iraq. President Donald Trump approved the military action under the justification that Soleimani posed an "imminent threat" to American lives and overseas interests.

Soleimani is alleged to have handled clandestine activities outside Iran; led powerful Shiite militias embedded in Iraq and encouraged his allies to attack U.S. targets in the country. The Trump Administration also believes that Soleimani supplied militia commanders with sophisticated new weapons, including Katyusha rockets, shoulder-fired missiles, and a specialized drone capable of eluding radar systems.

Iran's influence in the region has grown exponentially as the country fought alongside Americans to defeat ISIS, but lately Iraqis have been staging mass protests against the Islamic Republic. Soleimani hoped to reverse the tide by attacking American forces and provoking a military response that would redirect the rising protests toward the United States.

The Pentagon and CIA described Soleimani as "the single most powerful



U.S. airstrike kills Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds Force.

Submitted photo

operative in the Middle East today" and the central strategist in Iran's effort to promote the expansion of Shiite influence throughout the region. Most Iranians regarded Soleimani as the second most powerful official in Iran after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Former Central Command Commander and CIA Director David Petraeus called the killing of Qassem Soleimani "bigger than the death of Osama bin Laden."

One crown jewel of the Obama legacy is negotiating the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, more

commonly known as the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which required Iranians to cut or eliminate its stockpile of enriched uranium, reduce the number of centrifuges that could be used to further enrich uranium for nuclear weapons, and agree not to construct additional facilities.

Trump withdrew the United States from JCPOA in May 2018.

Later in the same year, Trump imposed a fresh round of sanctions against Iran to cripple the country economically and prevent its support for militant groups in the region. In April 2019, Trump officially designated the Rev-

olutionary Guards a terrorist organization; the group has around 125,000 military personnel engaged in ground, air, and naval activity.

Tensions have continued to rise between Iran and America — Iranian supported Shiite militias launched four rockets at a base near Baghdad International Airport that wounded five members of Iraq's Counter-Terrorism Service, then Shiite militias attacked the K-1 Air Base in Iraq, killing an American contractor and wounding four Americans. The U.S. responded by launching airstrikes across Iraq and Syria, kill-

ing 25 and wounded 55 Kataib Hezbollah militiamen. Days later the same militia attacked the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

The latter action resulted in Trump considering a stronger and more extreme response to Iran's provocations. Ultimately deciding the rewards outweighed the risk of removing a high level figure, a MQ-9 Reaper drone attacked Soleimani's convoy after shortly arriving at Baghdad International Airport. The operation killed 10 people, including Soleimani and his chief ally Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

This was the first time the U.S. killed a ma-

ior military leader since American pilots shot down the plane of Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto in World War II.

Trump's quick lurch to lethal military action was unexpected. It is anticipated that taking out a high value target could only stoke rising tensions in the region. Trump grew motivated to seek options to severely damage Iran's enlarging influence campaign.

Administration and Pentagon officials were stunned Trump chose such a strong-handed response to Iranian-led violence in Iraq, with Congress frustrated about POTUS not seeking their approval to conduct a military exercise targeting a top foreign leader.

Trump defended the airstrike by stating the intelligence community gathered data revealing Soleimani was involved in planning imminent attacks targeting Americans in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. But little concrete evidence has been shared with Congressional leaders, international partners, media, or the American people.

The Obama Administration designated Soleimani a terrorist in 2011 after accusing the general of a plot to kill the ambassador of Saudi Arabia. Trump compares the military response against Soleimani to actions taken by the Obama administra-

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Large crowd attends annual Emancipation Service

Six students receive \$1,000 scholarships

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

More than 100 people brought in the New Year reflecting on the past and looking toward the future during the annual Emancipation Service held last week.

Every year on New Year's Day, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Emancipation Association holds a ceremony to remember the signing of the Emancipation Procla-

mation, which was signed by President Abraham Lincoln on Jan. 1, 1863. The service is held at a different church every year and this year it was held at New Bethel Baptist Church where Rev. Dr. Kendall Jones is the pastor. Rev. Jones also delivered the keynote address.

While addressing the congregation on Wednesday morning, Jones discussed slavery and how some are still barred by the "psychological chains" that it created and how it still exists today. He said, "Here on the first day of 2020 we celebrate the emancipation of 3.5 million slaves. While we sit here celebrating emancipation, there are more today who are mentally shackled by the residue of slavery on both sides of

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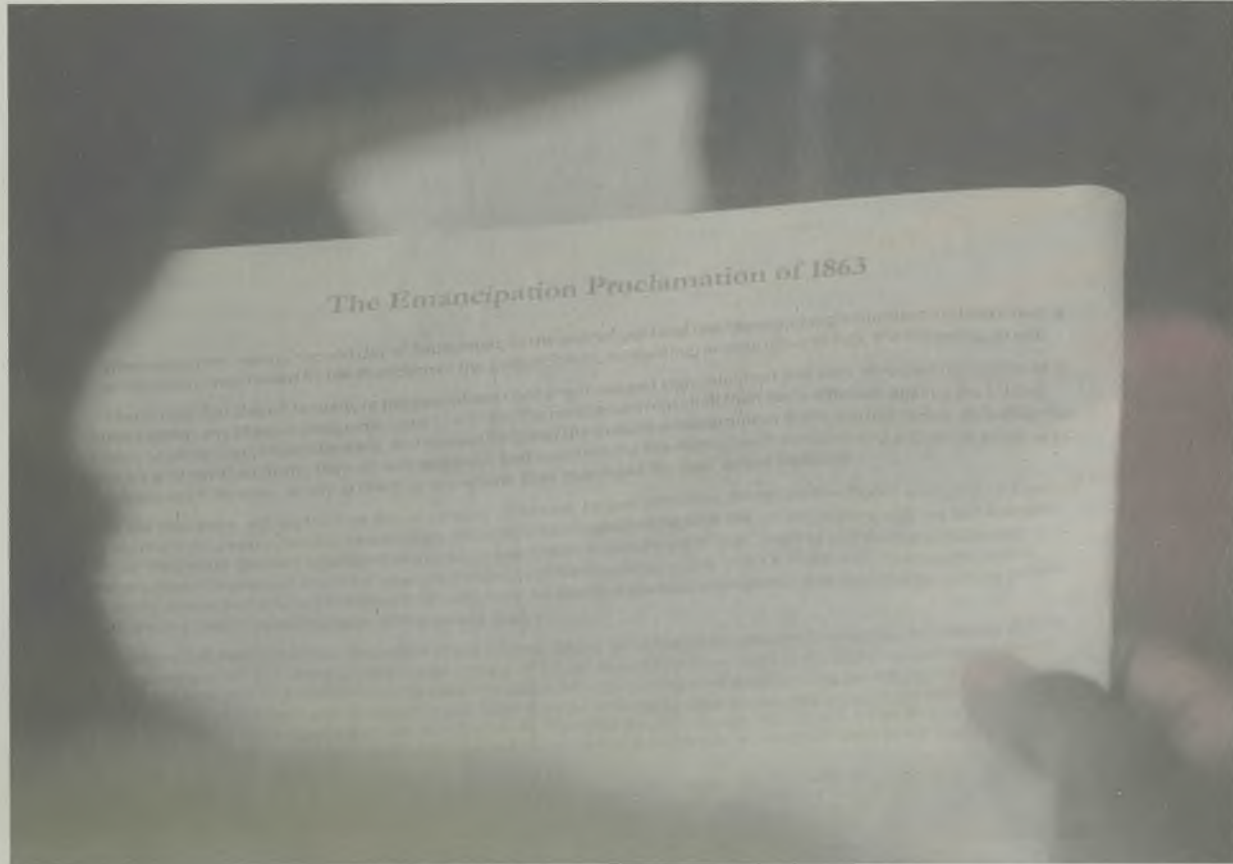


Photo by Tevin Stinson

Last week the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Emancipation Association continued their tradition of hosting the Emancipation Service on Jan. 1. This year the service was held at New Bethel Baptist Church.

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