

WAR DRUMS ARE SOUNDING

Many developments in the Middle East are causing great concern. Here are some of the developments.

* US STRIKES FIVE IRANIAN AL QODS/ MILITIA BASES IN SYRIA AND IRAQ. IRANIAN CASUALTIES

DEC 30/19. The US Air Force has struck **five targets** on **both sides of the Syrian-Iraqi border**. These targets were bases of the Iran-supported **Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah Shiite militia** and the **Revolutionary Guards *Al Qods***.

This was the first US direct military assault on Iranian Revolutionary Guards forces.

There were a **substantial number of people killed and wounded, including Iranian officers** in the strikes. The assault on the Shiites came just 24 hours after **the Shiites** had fired **30 rockets** at the **US K-1 base** near Kirkuk, killing an American **civilian contractor** and injuring **four US soldiers**.

It began shortly after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo paid a quick, **unannounced visit** to the US ***Ain al-Assad*** airbase with orders for the base commanders, following a decision reached in Washington, that the attack on the **K-1 base** by an Iranian-backed militia **must not go unanswered**. Pompeo flew out of Iraq shortly after his conference at Ain al-Assad airbase.

Earlier, an Iraqi interior ministry official informed Arab media of intelligence received that Al Qods chief **General Qassem Soleimani** had ordered the ***Hezbollah*** militia in Baghdad to withdraw the Iran-supplied rockets from storage, and **transfer them to residential areas as a means of deterring a US attack**.

The militia was also told to **reserve those rockets exclusively for use against US forces**. This disclosure strongly indicated that the ***Hezbollah*** militia was in the direct sights of an impending US assault.

Israel's Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz: "The Pentagon announcement that US forces had attacked five Iraqi Kata'ib Hezbollah centres in Iraq in response to Iran-backed aggression against coalition forces and is **a game changer** against Iran and its satellites.

Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei vowed "**harsh retaliation**" for the attack. American military forces and diplomatic installations throughout the region are on full alert, as are Israeli forces, knowing the Jewish State could face severe new threats from Tehran.

* SHIITES ATTACK AMERICAN EMBASSY IN IRAQ

Iran-backed Shiite militias in Iraq, attacked on the American Embassy in Baghdad on **New Year's Eve**. The front of the Embassy was set on fire.

The demonstrators, angry at US airstrikes against the Tehran-backed Kataib Hezbollah group in which at least 25 people were killed, hurled rocks, in two days of protests at the building, while US forces stationed on the rooftops fired tear gas to disperse them.

The huge embassy was built along the banks of the Tigris River in central Baghdad's fortified "green zone" during the American occupation following the 2003 invasion that

toppled Saddam Hussein, is the biggest US diplomatic mission in the world. Washington said its diplomats were safe and it was rushing hundreds of extra troops to the region.

U.S. Defence Secretary, Mark Esper, warned that Iran will now be met with U.S. military force. **“If Iran fails to grasp the extent of American power, it will suffer greater punishment than ever before.”**

The U.S. has some 5,200 troops in Iraq at the moment, and more are on the way.

A lot of people seem to have forgotten that we were literally on the brink of war with Iran earlier in 2019. Back in June, President Trump cancelled a major U.S. bombing mission against Iran **at the last minute**, and things seemed to settle down quite a bit since that time. But now tensions are rising once again.

* **THE PENTAGON WARNS, MORE MILITARY ACTION MAY BE COMING**

DEC 30. **U.S. airstrikes targeted the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria**, that U.S. officials believe have been behind recent rocket attacks **against U.S. forces**.

Of course those Iranian-backed forces would never have launched such attacks in the first place if they did not have permission from Tehran itself. The Iranians love to hide behind proxies, and for now the U.S. is only conducting airstrikes against those proxies. **But at some point President Trump’s patience is likely to run out, and at that point we could start hitting Iran itself.**

Over the past six months, the U.S. has sent **14,000 more troops** to the Middle East, and it is being reported that **“the Pentagon is considering deploying additional forces to the region.”** The drumbeats of war are starting to get louder again, and many believe that eventually one side is likely to push the other side a bit too far.

The attacks that we just witnessed were supposed to send a very strong message to Tehran. US air strikes left **19 people dead in Iraq and Syria** in retaliation **against an Iranian-backed militia group that was blamed for a rocket attack two days earlier that killed an American contractor.**

U.S. officials believe Iranian-backed militias are behind a recent spate of rocket attacks that have targeted U.S. bases and interests in Iraq over the last couple months.

A U.S. official told *Military Times* that Iran-backed militias are now using more lethal and longer range 122 mm rockets in their attacks.

Friday’s attack on Kirkuk is at least the eleventh rocket attack targeting an outpost housing American forces in the last two months.

I am certainly not a fan of military conflict, but **if I am sitting in the White House and someone keeps lobbing rockets at my troops, I wouldn’t wait two months to hit them back.** So why did President Trump wait so long?

As noted earlier, these Iranian-backed militias wouldn’t be doing anything without approval from Tehran. **If Trump really wants these rocket attacks to stop, Iranian leaders need to be sent a message that will be clear and unmistakable.**

And it appears that U.S. officials may be starting to lean in that direction. In fact, Secretary of Defence Mark Esper told the press that more military action “could be warranted”...

Pompeo, Mark Esper and General Mark Milley, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, appeared briefly in a club ballroom to comment on the airstrikes.

Esper termed the offensive “successful,” but said that Trump was informed that a further military response could be warranted.

It is hard to know what the Iranians are thinking. Perhaps they believe that if they use their proxies to make things uncomfortable enough for U.S. forces that Trump will eventually pull them out of the region. But if that is what they are really thinking, they have badly miscalculated.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to get cozy with Russia and China. In fact, the three nations have recently conducted “**their first-ever joint naval drills,**” in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. The training exercises were announced by China’s defence ministry as all three nations continue to have strained relations with the United States and its allies.

The Russians have developed a very strong military presence in the Middle East in recent years, and Russia and China have both warned about what a war between the U.S. and Iran would mean for the entire region. A major war in the Middle East would have very serious implications for the entire globe, and it would risk sparking a much wider conflict.

Right now US relations with Russia are already the worst that they have been since the end of the Cold War, and they just continue to deteriorate.

Most Americans don’t spend too much time thinking about a potential war with Russia, but over in Russia there is lots of talk about a possible military confrontation. In fact, Russia’s top general recently warned that the western powers are preparing for a “**large-scale military conflict**”...

Russia’s top general has warned a big war is coming in a chilling prediction amid ongoing tensions with NATO.

Valery Gerasimov, the chief of Vladimir Putin’s general staff, has said he believes the West are preparing for a “large-scale military conflict.” He was speaking at a senior briefing for the military – saying that the West has assigned “**adversary status**” to Russia.

Ultimately, one of the big reasons why Pres.Trump may have been so hesitant to be more aggressive with Iran is because he realizes that it could potentially spark World War 3.

Because once we go to war with Iran, the Iranians are going to start launching missiles directly at Israel, and Israel would undoubtedly strike back with overwhelming force.

Once the dominoes start falling, it could very easily set off a sequence of events **that nobody is going to be able to control.**

We definitely live at a time of wars and rumors of wars, and peace could be taken from the Earth very easily. (Matthew 24:6-8. Daniel 9:26)

So let us hope that cooler heads prevail.

But if the Iranians keep pushing their luck, it is only a matter of time before Trump gets fed up, and when he decides to hit them directly he is going to hit them exceedingly hard. – By Michael Snyder

* **WORLD WAR 3 FEARS AS IRAN VOWS TO ENACT 'SEVERE REVENGE' FOLLOWING THE US AIR STRIKE THAT ELIMINATED TOP IRANIAN GENERAL**

Iran has promised vengeance after a United States air strike in Baghdad killed **Qassem Soleimani**, Tehran's most prominent military commander on Friday, Jan.3.

The 62-year-old general who headed the elite Quds Force, was regarded as the second most powerful figure in Iran after Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He was the chief architect of the countries regional alliances and proxy wars.

As leader of the Quds Force, the foreign arm of the Revolutionary Guards, Soleimani had a key role in fighting in Syria and Iraq. Over two decades he was at the forefront of projecting the Islamic Republic's military influence across the Middle East.

The overnight attack, authorised by President Donald Trump, was a dramatic escalation in a "shadow war" in the Middle East between Iran and the US and its allies, principally Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The attack also killed top Iraqi militia commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, an adviser to Soleimani. Iran's state television reported that in all 10 people were killed and five of them were members of the Revolutionary Guard.

The strike followed a sharp increase in US-Iranian hostilities last week when pro-Iranian militiamen attacked the US embassy in Iraq following an American raid on the Kataib Hezbollah militia, founded by Muhandis.

President Hassan Rouhani said the assassination would stiffen Iranian resistance to the US, while the Revolutionary Guards said anti-US forces would exact revenge across the Muslim world. Hundreds of Iranians marched toward Khamenei's compound in Tehran to convey their condolences.

Soleimani had survived several assassination attempts by Western, Israeli and Arab agencies over the past two decades.

Israel has long seen Soleimani as a major threat, and PM Benjamin Netanyahu defended the US action. Israeli Army Radio said the military was on heightened alert.

Israeli lawmakers from across the political spectrum united Friday in praising the US strike that [killed Qassem Soleimani](#), the powerful head of Iran's elite Quds Force — with the exception of the Joint List, which primarily represents Arab Israelis, which denounced the operation.

RUSSIA'S Ministry of Defence called the killing a "short-sighted" step that would lead to escalations in the region.

COULD THIS BE LEADING TO WORLD WAR 3?

Iraqi P.M. Adel Abdul Mahdi condemned the killings as an act of aggression that breached his country's sovereignty and **would lead to war**.

UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres stressed that "the world cannot afford another war in the Gulf," and urged leaders to "exercise maximum restraint" following the American action.

But **Khamenei** said **harsh revenge awaited the "criminals"** who killed Soleimani while calling for three days of national mourning.

Soleimani's deputy, **Brigadier General Esmail Ghaani**, has been appointed to replace him.