

# War

## *The reality of a tension-filled future and a breakdown of Iranian-American relations.*

The sound of hundreds of thousands of feet hitting the pavement fills the street as a huge crowd shuffles towards the funeral procession of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Soleimani was killed on Jan. 3, 2020 by an American air strike near Baghdad Airport in Iraq. His killing has caused an uproar unlike anything the Iraqi people have experienced since the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989, an event in which over two million mourners flooded the streets. The death of Soleimani, as well as the exposion of Ukrainian Airlines Flight 752, have enlightened many to the nature of political tensions within the world, especially between the United States and Iran.

“What I know about politics right now is that it’s a mess and it’s extremely hard to follow due to mass media, but what it boils down to is historical resentment,” Lohit Talachutla (11) said of the political climate now. January 2020 has been an eventful month, with the beginning of the year seeing the death of Soleimani and Kobe and Gigi Bryant, as well as the destructive Australian Forest Fires, the Iowa Caucus, and an outbreak of the deadly coronavirus.

With the issue of what pop culture deems the beginning of World War III, it all began when Trump authorized the assassination of Qassem Soleimani seven months ago, in the summer of 2019. He authorized the act under the reasoning, “‘if Iran's increased aggression resulted in the death of an American', according to five current and former senior administration officials,” said CNN News. This authorization was a direct response to Iran shooting down an American drone in June of 2019, in which Trump’s national security advisor, John Bolton, pressed Trump to authorize Soleimani’s death. Trump declined this pressure, saying “that’s only on the table if they hit Americans.”

To understand this tension, one must go back into Iranian-American relations since the late 2000s.

Soleimani headed the Quds Force, which is part of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard. It was founded in the wake of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and defends the Islamic Republic of Iran. In 2007, George W. Bush declared the Quds Force a foreign terrorist organization. During the Obama administration, the Quds Force announced sanctions against Soleimani and three other Quds officials in response to a supposed assassination of the Saudi Arabian ambassador to America.

Trump and Bolton took it one step further. In April of 2019, Trump labeled the entire Iranian Revolutionary Guard a foreign terrorist organization. And in response to that, Iran labeled the U.S. military a terrorist organization.

That’s not even the beginning of recent tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

In 2018, Trump withdrew the United States from the Iran Nuclear Deal, under which Iran would agree to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow international inspectors in return for the lifting of crippling economic sanctions. Trump pulled American accordance and only tightened economic sanctions against Iran. Iran returned with increasingly aggressive attacks that happen in more frequent occurrences, such as over a dozen rocket bombings against American buildings.

The kicker came on December 27, 2019, when Kataib Hezbollah, an Iraqi militia that is part of the Popular Mobilization Forces but is backed by Iran, attacked an Iraqi base in Kirkuk, killing a U.S. contractor and injuring four U.S. service members. The base is owned by the Iraqi military, but hosts forces in accordance with Operation Inherent Resolve, the fight against ISIS. In December, American forces were more clustered than normal as a response to a plan for a counter-ISIS attack. After the attack, American air strikes launched in five different Kataib Hezbollah locations.

When Kataib Hezbollah bombed the American Embassy in turn, Trump finally authorized Soleimani’s death.

Soleimani had ordered Iraqi military officials to step up attacks and the Iran Revolutionary Guard and Iraqi military were very closely tied, which is why the death of an Iranian official would be as impactful to the Iraqis as it



David Ryan (12) stares into the camera as he talks about his knowledge of the tensions between Iran and the U.S. "So [Trump]'s definitely getting more involved for me, but I don't know if it's in, necessarily the right ways. Obviously killing Solemani was a big step," said Ryan of the involvement of Trump in the conflict. The death of Soleimani, as well as Ukrainian Flight 752's crash, have kickstarted strife between Iran and other developed countries. Photo by Elyse Sommer.

turned out to be.

The last remaining question of the death of the head of the Iran Revolutionary Guard came as: when was the best time to strike without major casualties? Trump and his officials decided that late nighttime at Imam Khomeini International Airport would be the least destructive option and in the late hours of Jan. 3, the order was carried out and Soleimani was terminated.

In acknowledgment of Soleimani’s death, Iran sent strike forces

against bases in Iraq, hosting American soldiers. Despite no American deaths, on Jan. 10, Trump announced further economic sanctions against Iran.

Trump’s influence cannot be understated in the event of Soleimani’s death, even if the decision to execute the Iranian official was made in the presence and under pressure from American officials.

“If Trump got involved in a war, then he would have to be reelected, essentially. That confirms that the American people don't really have a choice,” said David Ryan (12). “I think it's definitely a part in why he wants to get more involved.”

Ryan isn’t the only one who believes that there is an ulterior motive behind Trump’s order.

“I feel like there was no need to do what he did and to kill the leader. He said it was because he was obviously for the United States but I feel like that reaction caused so much worse...” Haley Smith (11) said. “I really do believe that it was kind of just a distraction.”

Others didn’t know what to think. The entire situation has become incredibly confusing and it wouldn’t be shocking to find students and adults alike with a muddled view of the political climate currently.

“I don't even know why it started like why he bombed Iran,” said an anonymous Trump supporter. “I don't really know why this whole conflict started.”

In a whirl-storm of media frenzy and political statements, the truth becomes hard to discern, as Jake Smith (12) corroborates. “Fake news spreads faster than any other news,” said Smith of the power of the media in confusing or enlightening the truth in situations like the death of Soleimani.

Soleimani’s death, while drawing thousands upon thousands of mourners, is not the most recent event in the long trail of a hate-filled Iranian-American timeline. The tension only seems to be growing, However, the conflict seemed to have come to a boil, and while students may speculate about the likelihood of WWII, the tensions have cooled. *E. Sommer*