



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 5, 2018

U.S. Reported to Back Assassination Plot by Israel

During the Cold War, it was an accepted policy of the U.S. government to covertly remove foreign leaders from power — or even kill them. There is even some speculation that the assassination of President John Kennedy was in retaliation for multiple U.S. efforts to assassinate Cuba's communist dictator, Fidel Castro.

While it is now officially against U.S. government policy to kill foreign leaders, it was reported earlier this week by *The Times of Israel* that America has told the Israeli government it would not object if they assassinated Major General Qassem Soleimani, the top military officer in Iran for the past 20 years. Soleimani also is in charge of Iran's foreign covert operations, and answers only to Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of Iran. Soleimani's Revolutionary Guards are promising to stifle dissent inside the country ruled by Shia Islamic mullahs.



The reported decision of the Trump administration to support the assassination of an Iranian military leader is in sharp contrast with the actions of the previous Obama administration. During the term of Barack Obama, three years ago, Israel probably would have succeeded in killing Soleimani while he was in Syria, but the Obama administration alerted the Iranians.

The Obama administration was at the time in intense negotiations with the Iranians on a nuclear weapons deal that has provoked strong opposition within the United States. The Obama intervention, which apparently saved Soleimani's life, "sparked a sharp disagreement between the Israeli and American security and intelligence apparatuses," according to a report in *Al-Jarida*, a Kuwaiti newspaper.

While the United States has had an official policy of not assassinating a foreign head of state or other top official of a foreign government for several years (although the United States did kill Osama bin Laden during the Obama tenure), Israel has continued to use the killing of selected personalities of known enemies of Israel. In one daring operation, Mossad agents killed a top Hamas leader in a Dubai hotel in 2010. They apparently suffocated Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in his hotel room, and left the country undetected.

In addition to the danger of assassination from the Israelis, Soleimani, a Shiite Muslim, is strongly disliked by Sunni Muslims. He is accused of having committed multiple human rights violations with Iran-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.



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Since taking office, President Trump has threatened to scrap the Iran nuclear deal, and has publicly backed the dissidents in Iran, arguing on Monday that it was “time for a change,” adding that the country’s population is “hungry” for freedom.

U.S. law does not directly prohibit an order by a president to kill a foreign leader, unless the “hit” occurs inside the United States or in a foreign nation outside of the leader’s own borders. President Gerald Ford issued an executive order during his tenure that stated, “No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, political assassination.” Although President Ronald Reagan expanded this provision with his own executive order, which prohibited even those “acting on behalf of the United States Government” from engaging “in, assassination,” he did order the 1986 bombing of Libya, in an apparent attempt to kill Moammar Gadhafi. This was shortly after the bombing of a Berlin nightclub by Gadhafi agents, an attack that targeted American military personnel, several of whom were murdered.

During the 1950s, when John Foster Dulles was secretary of state and his brother, Allen Dulles, was the top man at the CIA, it was standard practice to target foreign rulers for removal, sometimes by assassination, if necessary.

While the U.S. government would not be an active participant (so far as we know) in the killing of an Iranian military general, its green light to the Israeli government to carry out such an operation could be seen as an act of war by Teheran. While the ayatollahs who run Iran are certainly brutal dictators, and their removal from power would most likely improve the lives of the Iranian people, Americans could possibly experience “blowback” — perhaps a terrorist response by Iranian surrogates — in response.

For those who know their history, the assassination of the archduke of Austria, Franz Ferdinand, by a member of the Black Hand terrorist organization lit the fuse that touched off the First World War in 1914. Although Serbia apparently was not an active participant in the murders of the archduke and his wife in Sarajevo, its leaders clearly knew that the assassination was going to be attempted, but failed to alert the Austrians.

Giving a “green light” to assassinate a foreign leader would seem to be an even bigger provocation. While Israel is a sovereign nation, and the United States should respect its decisions to do what it thinks is necessary for its own national survival, many believe that the Trump administration needs to avoid entangling our nation in these types of actions.

Photo of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani: akkasemosalman.ir



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