

The Land of the Brave Is Back

What does the president of the United States do when confronted with evil? His advisers may present him with several choices. He may offer the perpetrators of worldwide terrorist activities millions of dollars in return for concessions, as did Barack Obama. He may decide to sit and wait, as did the previous president, while the U.S. Embassy is attacked and the ambassador and three state department officials were violently slaughtered. Or, he may decide to eliminate the head of the military machine that created Shiite control in several Middle East Islamic nations. President Donald Trump chose a drone strike to remove the head of Iranian dominance in Iraq.

Why would the U.S. target Qassem Soleimani, a lone individual? In 2003, the U.S. entered Iraq, and one man materialized as the most skilled opponent in that country. He wasn't even an Iraqi; he was the leader of Iran's elite Quds force. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces during the Iraq War, called the Shiite leader a "truly evil figure." Soleimani led such proxy groups as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad; and Brookings Institution reports that another subcontractor, Hezbollah in Lebanon, has been responsible for killing more Americans than any other single global terrorist group.

These fanatical Muslim groups are parked on the borders of Israel—Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Yemen, and the Iran Revolutionary Guard in Syria.

In clandestine documents obtained by an award-winning news organization, The Intercept, it was reported: "Iranian spies privately expressed concern that the brutal tactics favored by Soleimani and his Iraqi proxies were laying the groundwork for major blowback against the Iranian presence in Iraq. Soleimani was also criticized for his own alleged self-promotion amid the fighting. Photos of the Iranian commander on battlefields

across Iraq had helped build his image as an iconic military leader. But that outsized image was also turning him into a figure of terror for many ordinary Iraqis.”

It was in 1983 that I realized just how serious Iran’s threat is. At a little past 6:00 a.m. in Beirut, I was sleeping on a beachhead, having met with a group of U.S. Marines the previous evening. The troops, stationed at Beirut International Airport, were just beginning a new day. One Marine sentry at the airport gate looked up to see a big yellow Mercedes truck barreling down on the security gate. The sentry reportedly stated that the driver of the truck smiled at him as he crashed through the gates. The truck was on a course for the lobby of the barracks. The sentries, armed only with loaded pistols, were unable to stop the speeding vehicle.

The truck carried explosives equal to six tons of TNT. The driver rammed into the lower floor of the barracks, which discharged his deadly cargo. The explosion was so devastating that the four-story building pancaked floor by floor into a heap of rubble. Many of the 241 dead were not killed by the blast itself but were crushed beneath the cinder block building as it fell.

It was Iran’s proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah—the Party of Allah—that attacked the United States’ 8th Battalion of Marines in its barracks in Lebanon in 1983.

Iranian officials deny, of course, that they support terrorist groups; but that is a matter of semantics. What the Western world calls “terrorists,” such as Hamas and Hezbollah, the Iranian hierarchy simply calls “liberation movements.” Iranian political analyst Hassan Abbasi disingenuously addressed Iran’s ties with Hezbollah, referring to the group’s agenda as “sacred.”

When invited to speak at the United Nations in October 2005, Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called upon Allah to

quickly usher in the reemergence of the 12th or hidden imam at the conclusion of his discourse.

The fanatical leader later claimed that while he spoke to that august body, he was surrounded by a halo of light. Ahmadinejad later regaled a local ayatollah in Tehran with the story of how “the leaders of the world” stared at him during the time he spoke. He further claimed that they were unable to blink or turn away, as though some unseen force held them in a trancelike state:

“The last day when I was speaking before the (U.N. General) Assembly, one of our group told me when I started to say, ‘In the name of God the Almighty, the merciful,’ he saw a light around me, and I was placed inside this aura, and I felt it myself. I felt the atmosphere suddenly change, and for those 27 or 28 minutes the leaders of the world did not blink. When I say they did not bat an eyelid, were astonished as if a hand held them there and made them sit.”

After the death of Soleimani, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi, described as enjoying a “special relationship” with Iran—and who enjoyed Soleimani’s personal support when needed, vowed to seek the aid of the Iraqi Parliament to expel the U.S. military. The Iraqi Parliament later voted to force foreign troops from their country.

President Trump responded by reminding Abdul-Mahdi, “We have a very extraordinarily expensive air base that’s there. It cost billions of dollars to build. ... We’re not leaving unless they pay us back for it.”

Mike Evans is a No. 1 New York Times’ bestselling author with 96 published books. He is the founder of Friends of Zion Museum in Jerusalem of which the late President Shimon Peres, Israel’s ninth president, was the chair. He also serves as a founding member on the Trump Evangelical Faith Initiative and has 66 million Facebook followers on the Jerusalem Prayer Team

page.