

The Crimes of Qassem

The U.S. should shut down Iran's top terrorist

by Kenneth R. Timmerman



He might not be a household name in America – at least, not yet. But throughout the Middle East, Qassem Suleymani makes the righteous and the innocent tremble.

To the righteous – meaning, from his perspective, the Shiite zealots who believe the Islamic state of [Iran](#) should establish the caliphate and dominate the world – he is an awe-inspiring figure.

He is powerful. He is brash. He brazenly shows up on the battlefield to encourage his troops. In Iraq, he has become the maker of prime ministers and governments, and commands a militia of 100,000 men.

To his innocent victims, he is the face of Terror, Inc. As head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), Qassem Suleymani is [Iran's](#) top terrorist.

The Quds Force is euphemistically in charge of “extraterritorial” operations for the IRGC. I call it their expeditionary overseas terrorist wing.

In the early days, they were the ones who sent terror trainers to Lebanon to teach Hezbollah how to build better car bombs. Later, they knocked off a Lebanese prime minister and launched an all-out war on Israel in the summer of 2006, firing thousands of rockets at Israeli schools, hospitals and towns.

When [Iran](#)’s leaders decided in the early 1990s to forge an alliance in terror with a Saudi dissident named Osama bin Laden, they turned the file over to the Quds Force for action.

The Quds Force has been implicated in terror plots all around the world, including a failed 2011 attempt to blow up the Saudi ambassador at a Washington, D.C. restaurant. Suleymani and his operatives were also implicated in the September 11 plot, helping 10 to 12 of the Saudi “muscle” hijackers travel clandestinely through [Iran](#) to Afghanistan and providing logistical and other support.

In February 2007, Pentagon officials briefed reporters in Baghdad on Quds Force assistance to insurgents in Iraq.

The briefing included information and documents seized from Quds Force operatives detained by U.S. forces in Iraq, and photographic evidence of Iranian-made roadside bombs, known as Explosively Formed Projectiles, or EFPs.

The introduction of EFPs onto the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan by Suleymani and his men changed the scope and scale of U.S. casualties, ultimately accounting for as many as 1,500 U.S. battlefield dead.

I spoke recently to medically retired U.S. Army Sgt. Robert Bartlett about his encounter with an Iranian EFP. The force of the projectile “cut me in half from the left corner of my temple down to my jaw, and took my gunner’s legs off. Because

of this Iranian bomb, I died three times in five days.

“Only my faith kept me alive,” he said.

The U.S. Army told Samantha Balsely that her 23-year old husband Michael had been killed in Iraq by an Improvised Explosive Device. Later, it became apparent that he, too, had been killed by an Iranian EFP.

“When I found out the government had given [Iran](#) billions of dollars, it was the biggest slap in the face,” Samantha told me. “How can you say you respect what our men and women do when you order them over there and then you pay their killers. It’s not right.”

Samantha Balsley is right. It’s just not right for the U.S. government to continue rewarding the Iranian regime, when they continue to kill Americans.

We know who these killers are. They have names. And they work for an organization: the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and its “expeditionary” Quds Force.

As an immediate step, the Trump administration should follow through on hints that it is contemplating designating the IRGC and the Quds Force as international terrorist organizations.

The United States should take additional steps against Suleymani personally, blocking his assets, punishing businesses that transact with him or his Quds Force killers, and seeking an international travel ban.

Beyond that, the U.S. intelligence community should investigate reports from officials and media in Iraqi Kurdistan that Suleymani and the Quds Force facilitated the ISIS takeover of Mosul and the Nineveh Plain in June 2014, acts that could qualify as war crimes.

The crimes of Qassem Suleymani are many. After Osama bin Laden, he has more American blood on his hand than any

terrorist. It's time we shut him down for good.

- *Kenneth R. Timmerman is the author of "Countdown to Crisis: the Coming Nuclear Showdown with [Iran](#)" (Crown Forum, 2005).*