



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 7, 2020

Should We Believe Trump's Reasons for Soleimani Assassination?

But this is not the only mock-heroism in the world; there is yet another sort as mischievous, but still more ridiculous; and that is, a violent appetite for war, and victory, and conquest, without engaging personally in the danger, or coming near it; but being very valorous by proxy, and fond of fighting without drawing a sword. This was the prudent bravery of a late aged conqueror, who was never tired of war, yet never tired his own person in it: In the heat of a battle fought for his glory, he ran no risk, but sat securely at a great distance with the wise old woman his mistress, waiting for laurels of other people's winning. When his agents had bought a town for him treacherously, or his generals stolen a province as treacherously, still it was victory, still fair conquest; and the glory was his at three hundred league' distance: for every thing that he did was glorious, the meanest and the basest things; and by these means he became immortal, immortal in conquest without a scar.

— Cato's Letters Number 93, September 8, 1722

Former U.S. Representative Ron Paul does not believe President Trump had to assassinate General Qassim Soleimani because of "imminent threats" the latter posed to American citizens.

In an [article published January 6](#), Paul explained why he doubts the president's purported purpose is the real reason that Soleimani was killed in a drone strike in Baghdad on January 3.

"Because Trump and the neocons — like Pompeo — have been lying about Iran for the past three years in an effort to whip up enough support for a US attack," Paul writes. "From the phony justification to get out of the Iran nuclear deal, to blaming Yemen on Iran, to blaming Iran for an attack on Saudi oil facilities, the US Administration has fed us a steady stream of lies for three years because they are obsessed with Iran."

There is no denying that the federal government has "fed us a steady stream of lies" about lots of things, including wars.

The so-called Afghanistan Papers published by the *Washington Post* in December reveal that high-level U.S. military leaders believed the war in Afghanistan to be unwinnable, but those opinions were kept hidden from the American public so as not to affect support for the conflict that is now approaching two



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decades in length and has cost nearly 3,000 American servicemen their lives, as well as easily 10 times that many Afghani civilians.

In other words, being told lies by government is not a debatable point.

Beyond the killing of Soleimani, Paul perceives that President Trump is softening the beach for an escalation of hostilities with Iran. Paul wrote:

President Trump has warned that his administration has already targeted 52 sites important to Iran and Iranian culture and the US will attack them if Iran retaliates for the assassination of Gen. Soleimani. Because Iran has no capacity to attack the United States, Iran's retaliation if it comes will likely come against US troops or US government officials stationed or visiting the Middle East. I have a very easy solution for President Trump that will save the lives of American servicemembers and other US officials: just come home. There is absolutely no reason for US troops to be stationed throughout the Middle East to face increased risk of death for nothing.

Remarkably, Paul's solution is not only simple, but constitutional, too. There has been no declaration of war, therefore there is no justification for the presence of U.S. armed forces anywhere other than in the United States and their territories. Period.

It isn't as if Paul is the first person to proclaim the dangers in allowing the executive to initiate combat.

In 1793, James Madison fought a paper war against Alexander Hamilton, with Madison reminding his readers that Congress possessed the exclusive constitutional authority over the declaration of war.

"Those who are to conduct a war [the Executive Branch] cannot in the nature of things, be proper or safe judges, whether a war out to be commenced, continued, or concluded. They are barred from the latter functions by a great principle in free government, analogous to that which separates the sword from the purse, or the power of executing from the power of enacting laws," wrote Madison, under the pseudonym Helvidius.

In a later letter, he concluded:

It is also to be remembered, that however the consequences flowing from such premises, may be disavowed at this time, or by this individual, we are to regard it as morally certain, that in proportion as the doctrines make their way into the creed of the government, and the acquiescence of the public, every power that can be deduced from them, will be deduced, and exercised sooner or later by those who may have an interest in so doing. The character of human nature gives this salutary warning to every sober and reflecting mind. And the history of government in all its forms and in every period of time, ratifies the danger. A people, therefore, who are so happy as to possess the inestimable blessing of a free and defined constitution cannot be too watchful against the introduction, nor too critical in tracing the consequences, of new principles and new constructions, that may remove the landmarks of power.

Beyond the president's disregard for constitutional separations of power and the oath he swore to uphold them, Dr. Paul points out that the strike authorized by President Trump that killed Soleimani was carried out on Iraqi soil without Iraqi permission.

In our Ron Paul Liberty Report program last week we observed that the US attack on a senior Iranian military officer on Iraqi soil — over the objection of the Iraq government — would serve to finally unite the Iraqi factions against the United States. And so it has: on Sunday the Iraqi parliament voted to expel US troops from Iraqi soil. It may have been a non-binding resolution, but



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there is no mistaking the sentiment. US troops are not wanted and they are increasingly in danger. So why not listen to the Iraqi parliament?

There is little doubt that should another sovereign country send a weaponized drone into the territory of the United States and use that drone to assassinate a third-party national that country believed posed an imminent threat to that country, the president would consider that drone strike an act of war against the United States, regardless of the intentions of the target of the strike or the justness of the drone launching country's quest to kill the target.

Yet, the government of the United States carries out such missions routinely. In the case of the killing of General Soleimani, the sovereign state of Iraq denied permission to the United States to enter its airspace for the purpose of assassinating an alleged threat, but the United States moved forward with its fatal flight plan.

Apparently President Trump is aware of the plethora of problems plaguing the killing of the Iranian general he ordered. During an Oval Office meeting with the Greek prime minister on January 7, President Trump walked back his earlier threats to target Iranian cultural sites, telling reporters that his administration is "supposed to be very careful with [Iran's] cultural heritage." Adding, that "if that's what the law is, I like to obey the law."

The law the president referred to is an article of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict which classifies the targeting of cultural sites as a war crime.

But, we're not at war, right? The president wants to obey the law, right?

The supreme law governing the federal government is the U.S. Constitution, and the articles of that law grant to Congress the sole authority to declare war and does not grant the president the power to order assassinations. That isn't to say the Constitution couldn't grant those powers.

Article V of the Constitution provides a means of amending the document and should Congress and the states agree to grant the president power to declare war, then all future presidents would have a green light to go ahead and send servicemen into combat around the globe. Until then, President Trump should obey the law — the law he swore an oath to obey.

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