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## Iraq Is Conquered—On to Jerusalem

After 40 years of struggle, Iran has finally subdued Iraq. Now it sets its sights on the greater prize.

- Brent Nagtegaal
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“Now the Iranian nation eagerly awaits the establishment of the Jerusalem Army.” This provocative statement lies within the first official charter of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), written in December 1981.

It was just one year after Iraq’s Saddam Hussein attacked Iran, seeking to capitalize on the instability following Iran’s revolution a year earlier. Iran was deeply focused on repelling an Iraqi attack.

Why, then, establish a Jerusalem army? Because in the hearts of many of Iran’s revolutionaries, fighting an offensive war against Iraq was a necessary step toward the real prize: taking Jerusalem.

“The IRGC argued that the ‘greater victory’ of delivering Jerusalem from Israeli occupation could be achieved only after the ‘lesser victory’ of defeating Saddam Hussein,” writes Afshon Ostovar in his 2016 book *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics and Iran’s Revolutionary Guards*. “Iraq became seen as both the literal and figurative gateway to Jerusalem and the first step toward the emancipation of Muslim societies.” A popular slogan during the war on Iraq was “the path to Jerusalem runs through Karbala,” the location of Shiite holy places just south of Baghdad.

This was the cause that burned in Iranian hearts as they waged war on Iraq for eight long years during the 1980s. Even after something like a million souls perished and the war ended inconclusively, that ambition did not die: *Iraq, then Jerusalem*.

It has taken decades, but recent events show Iran is finally realizing the first part of this long-held mission—and proceeding to the next.

## Signs of Victory

In early March, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and a huge delegation began a three-day state visit to Baghdad. This was Rouhani’s first trip to Iraq’s capital since he became president in 2013. It signaled Iran’s victory over the United States for influence in post-Saddam Iraq.

Photos of Rouhani’s trip showed a long table in meetings with Iraqi officials, at least 16 men present on each side. They were signing a batch of agreements aimed at cementing an alliance.

The visit came precisely as the U.S. was working to punish the Iranian regime with strict financial sanctions. By cutting off funds, Washington aims to force Tehran to soften its warlike posture in the region. It hoped Iraq would support at least some of these sanctions. Rouhani’s Baghdad visit wounded that hope.

“We consider this trip a new start in our relations with Iraq,” Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said. He discussed “joint interests” and “regional cooperation.” He thanked Iraq for having “refused the unjust and illegal sanctions imposed on the

Iranian people.”

At the same time, Iraqi lawmakers are pressuring the U.S. to evacuate its remaining forces from their country.

Currently, America stations about 5,000 forces at an Iraqi airbase—a critical post in the fight against the remnants of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq. But America’s presence there is not solely about the terrorist group. In a February interview with CBS’s *Face the Nation*, U.S. President Donald Trump made an off-the-cuff comment revealing that part of the rationale in remaining at the base is to keep an eye on Iran.

Iraq’s reaction to that statement was negative and emphatic. “Don’t overburden Iraq with your own issues,” Iraqi President Barham Salih responded. “The U.S. is a major power ... but do not pursue your own policy priorities. We live here.” The Fatah Alliance, the Iraqi parliament’s second-largest party, is now pushing for U.S. troops to leave. As such pressure increases, America’s complete evacuation seems only a matter of time.

## Suleimani—Conqueror of Karbala

The same weekend as Rouhani’s visit to Baghdad, yet another portentous event took place. Just as Rouhani was preparing to depart on his trip, the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was at an official function—the first of its kind since the Islamic Republic was established in 1979. Khamenei awarded the prestigious Order of Zulfaqr, Iran’s highest military honor, to Gen. Qassem Suleimani—the only Iranian military official to receive it in the last 40 years.

Why decorate Suleimani now? One cannot help but recognize the connection to the meetings Rouhani was to hold in Baghdad.

Suleimani was, in fact, being honored for his critical role *intaking over Iraq*—a task that stretched clear back to the days of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Awarding “Order of Zulfaqr”— a highly outstanding military sign of honor in the Islamic Republic of Iran— to Major General Qassem Soleimani, Commander-in-Chief of Quds Corps [pic.twitter.com/H6jR2r7NJA](https://pic.twitter.com/H6jR2r7NJA)

— Khamenei.ir (@khamenei\_ir) [March 11, 2019](#)

Suleimani had just turned 22 years old. He volunteered for the newly established Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This military force was separate from Iran’s official military, which could not be trusted to ensure the continuation of the revolution. At first, the IRGC was used to tamp down internal dissent, but when the Iraq-Iran War began, it was called on to defend against Saddam Hussein’s invasion.

During the eight bloody years that followed, Suleimani proved his mettle on the battlefield. He rose through the ranks, eventually becoming a division commander while still in his 20s. After the war, he remained an IRGC commander.

In late 1997, Suleimani assumed leadership of the IRGC Quds Force, a special expeditionary unit that orchestrates Iranian action in foreign domains. *Quds* is the Arabic term for Jerusalem, which betrays the force’s ultimate goal. Under Suleimani, the Quds Force oversaw the training and decision-making of Iran’s proxies: It directed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza; it conducted missions in Afghanistan—and, of course, Iraq.

Inside Iraq, Suleimani won the affection of several Shiite movements that chafed against Saddam's Sunni governance. Then, in 2003, the United States invaded to remove Hussein. For a moment, a temporary, informal alliance budded between U.S. armed forces and Suleimani's assets.

When Saddam Hussein fell, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote this in the June 2003 issue: "Saddam Hussein was the only leader that Iran feared. Now the U.S. has taken him out of the way. But does America have the will or strength to guard the spoils of war? Prophecy states that it does not.

"Have we now cleared the way for Shiite Iran to rule over Shiite Iraq?"

Earlier in the article he wrote, "It may seem shocking, given the U.S. presence in the region right now, but prophecy indicates that in pursuit of its goal, Iran will probably TAKE OVER IRAQ."

TODAY, 16 YEARS LATER, THAT PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED.

## Shadow War on America

Soon after American and coalition forces expelled Hussein's regime, Iran initiated a long-term shadow war against the U.S. in Iraq. Who helmed that war? None other than Qassem Suleimani.

In 2004, the Quds Force began flooding Iraq with lethal roadside bombs that Americans referred to as EFPS—"explosively formed projectiles." These warheads, which fire a molten copper slug able to penetrate armor, wreaked havoc on coalition forces. EFPS could be made only by skilled technicians, and they were often triggered by sophisticated motion sensors. "There was zero question where they were coming from," Gen. Stanley McChrystal, head of the Joint Special Operations Command at the time, told the *New Yorker* in 2013. "We knew where all the factories were in Iran."

In 2008, sensing the success of America's troop surge, Suleimani reached out to the U.S. general in command, saying, "Dear General Petraeus, You should know that I, Qassem Suleimani, control the policy for Iran with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza and Afghanistan. And indeed, the ambassador in Baghdad is a Quds Force member. The individual who's going to replace him is a Quds Force member."

Petraeus refused to negotiate with this man, whose hands were stained with so much American blood. At the time, the U.S. seemed to be winning in Iraq.

Soon, though, a new administration took over Washington. President Barack Obama decided it was time to draw down forces in Iraq.

After that drawdown, in America's absence the Sunni Islamic State rose up to fight against virtually everyone in the region—especially the Shiites of Iraq. Iraq and the Kurds in northern Iraq received welcome help from Suleimani in the form of weapons and leadership. The main ground forces in Iraq were not the Iraqi Army, but the very Shiite militias, numbering over 100,000 soldiers, that had allied with Suleimani years before. And they were still answering to Suleimani.

New Sardar Qasem Soleimani 01

*Suleimani was being honored for his role in taking over Iraq—a task that stretched back to the 1979 Islamic Revolution.*  
(Akkasemosalman.IR)

Again America was called in to provide air cover to free Iraq, this time from the brutal Islamic State. Thus the U.S. actually found itself *working with Iran*.

Mr. Flurry wrote about the folly of the situation in the January 2018 *Trumpet*: “When you see what Iran is doing, it is dumbfounding that the U.S. has followed an anti-terrorism strategy that involves FIGHTING ALONGSIDE IRAN, the number one state sponsor of terrorism! For America to be fighting *alongside Iran*, something is TERRIBLY WRONG! We have fallen into a deadly trap! ...

“America is not actually fighting alongside Iran—WE ARE EMPOWERING IT! Iran now looks like an *effective and useful partner* in the war against terrorism. AMERICA HAS HELPED TO MAKE IRAN APPEAR TO BE THE SAVIOR IN IRAQ AND SYRIA”

This shortsighted strategy is what created the conditions that culminated in the events of March. To recap: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani was in Baghdad cementing a new relationship with Iraq. And Gen. Qassem Suleimani was in Tehran receiving the highest military honor Iran has to offer.

Certainly, the timing of the award was not lost on Iranians—not those with a sense of history. It acknowledged that for 40 years, Suleimani has fought for the revolution, a revolution whose first mission was to conquer Iraq. Suleimani was there in the 1980s on the front lines against Saddam Hussein. After America overthrew Saddam in 2003, Suleimani led the long shadow war against the U.S. in Iraq. From 2014 to now, he has mobilized and then commanded the Shiite militias to fight the Islamic State.

Now, in 2019, with the Islamic State all but vanquished and the U.S. preparing to vacate, Suleimani is being recognized as

the conqueror of Karbala.

What is next? Simply look to the IRGC creed: The path that cuts through Karbala ends in Jerusalem.

## ‘Toward Jerusalem’

Almost on cue, mere days after Suleimani was decorated, Iran announced a new offensive exercise involving the mass use of drones. These were not simple drones designed for reconnaissance flights, but attack drones that can fly great distances and carry massive loads of explosives.

This aerial exercise over the Persian Gulf on March 14 was the first large-scale drill using offensive drones, the *Washington Post* reported. The 50 Iranian-made Shahed 171 drones were copies of the U.S.-built RQ-170 Sentinel stealth drone that fell into Iranian territory in 2011. At the time, President Obama decided against retrieving or destroying the drone, lest Iran perceive it as an act of war.

New 190318 Iran Drone Getty Images 509522112 Copy



*Iranians walk past Iran's Shahed 129 drone displayed during celebrations in Tehran to mark the 37th anniversary of the Islamic revolution on February 11, 2016. (ATTA KENARE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES)*

With this military drill, it appears the Iranians have successfully copied the American technology. In the exercise, the drones flew over 620 miles before successfully striking their intended target on an island in the Persian Gulf located within Iran's territorial waters.

However, more important than the success of the exercises is the name the IRGC gave it: "TOWARD JERUSALEM 1."

The connection with the events earlier the same week is unmistakable. Just as the IRGC announced nearly 40 years ago, Iran conquered Karbala—and now it is advancing toward the real prize.

## What Prophecy Says

While it is impressive to witness Iran's long-term commitment to its strategy in the Middle East, there is something far more extraordinary at play with Iran's rise, its conquest of Iraq, and its play for Jerusalem.

Over 2,500 years ago—just three years after the ancient Babylonians were conquered by the ancestors of the Iranians, the Persians—the Prophet Daniel recorded a stunning prophecy. This longest single prophecy in the Bible, recorded in Daniel 11, details the rise and fall of kingdoms in the years following the Persian Empire's fall. Most of the chapter deals with two of those kingdoms, "the king of the south," based in Egypt, and "the king of the north," based in Mesopotamia. The chapter's first verses were fulfilled by the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Kingdoms, respectively.

However, not all of this prophecy was fulfilled anciently! The latter part of the chapter is for "the time of the end."

Verse 40 says, "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over."

The Ptolemies and the Seleucids have long disappeared. Who, then, are the modern counterparts of the king of the south and king of the north? Please consider the following long-standing forecast of the *Trumpet*.

Our September-October 1990 issue featured an article titled "King of the South—Is He Now on the World Scene?" Mr. Flurry identified this "king" as a Middle Eastern power bloc, possibly led by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, that would violently clash with "the king of the north."

In 1992, he told *Trumpet* readers that he believed *Iran* would be the king of radical Islam. Then in December 1994—while Saddam Hussein was still in power—Mr. Flurry asked, “Is Iraq About to Fall to Iran?” In the July 1998 *Trumpet* he wrote, “The stage is being set for an Islamic group of nations to be led by Iran as the prophesied king of the south .... Iran has a foreign policy with a lot of ‘push.’”

In the February 1995 *Trumpet*, Mr. Flurry berated the West for being “spellbound by peace treaties” and thus suffering willful blindness to “Iran’s massive plot to control the Middle East.” Then he wrote: “*The most precious jewel of Iran’s plan is to conquer Jerusalem*. This would then galvanize the Islamic world behind Iran” (emphasis added).

What does all this mean? It means that 2,500 years ago God gave the Prophet Daniel a vision for the time of the end—our time today. Based on that prophecy, Mr. Flurry wrote *25 years ago* that Iran would head the king of the south, that Iraq would fall to Iran, and that Iran would initiate a plan to conquer Jerusalem.

In 2019, we see it all happening.

This confirms the accuracy of biblical prophecy and validates the *Trumpet*’s warning message.

Now that it has taken over Iraq, watch for Iran to become more vocal and pushy against Israel. Its “Toward Jerusalem 1” exercises are only the start.

Iran intends not only to take Jerusalem from the Jews, but also to use the Palestinian cause to galvanize its leadership over the Islamic world. As the 1981 IRGC charter also relates, “[I]f the Islamic Republic through radio and television propagates the establishment of the Jerusalem army throughout the Islamic world—in spite of Zionist plots—millions of Muslims will be ready to liberate Jerusalem.”

The Bible does indeed indicate that millions of Muslims will rise up against Jerusalem. However, it also reveals that the Iranian-led king of the south will not succeed! That prize will fall into the hands of the other king in Daniel’s prophecy: the king of the north.

But even then, the “victory” will be short-lived.

You need not be oblivious to the future of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Iran’s strategy to conquer Jerusalem is laid out in Daniel 11 and other prophecies and is explained in Mr. Flurry’s booklet [\*The King of the South\*](#). ■

All this fighting over Jerusalem is not without hope. The rise of Iran as the king of the south is a step that hails the soon-coming return of the true King of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ. He will, finally, put an end to the incessant warfare over the city in the name of religion, and will establish His own government of peace from that holy city.