**Opposing conflict**

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The US stands at the precipice of war. President Trump’s rhetorical efforts to sell himself as the “anti-war” president have been exposed as a fraud via his assault on Iran.

Most Orwellian of all is Trump’s claim that the assassination of Iranian General Qassam Soleimani was necessary to avert war, following the New Year’s Eve attack on the US embassy in Baghdad. In reality the US hit on Soleimani represents a criminal escalation of the conflict between these two countries.

The general’s assassination was rightly seen as an act of war, so the claim that the strike is a step toward peace is absurd on its face. We should be perfectly clear about the fundamental threat to peace posed by the Trump administration. Iran has already promised “harsh retaliation” following the assassination, and announced it is pulling out of the 2015 multi-national agreement prohibiting the nation from developing nuclear weapons.

Trump’s escalation has dramatically increased the threat of all-out war. Recognizing this threat, I sketch out an argument here based on my initial thoughts of this conflict, providing three reasons for why Americans need to oppose war.

Soleimani was the head of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – the Quds Force – a clandestine military intelligence organization that specializes in paramilitary-style operations throughout the Middle East, and which is described as seeking to further Iranian political influence throughout the region. Trump celebrated the assassination as necessary to bringing Soleimani’s “reign of terror” to an end. The strike, he claimed, was vital after the U.S. caught Iran “in the act” of planning “imminent and sinister attacks on American diplomats and military personnel.”

But Trump’s justification for war comes from a country with a long history of distorting and fabricating evidence of an Iranian threat. American leaders have disingenuously and propagandistically portrayed Iran as on the brink of developing nuclear weapons for decades.

Presidents Bush and Obama were both rebuked, however, by domestic intelligence and international weapons inspectors, which failed to uncover evidence that Iran was developing these weapons, or that it was a threat to the US.

Outside of previous exaggerations, evidence is emerging that the Trump administration and the intelligence community are not of one mind regarding Iran’s alleged threat. Shortly after Soleimani’s assassination, the Department of Homeland Security declared there was “no specific, credible threat” from Iran within US borders. And US military officials disagree regarding Trump’s military escalation. As the New York Times reports:

“In the chaotic days leading to the death of Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, Iran’s most powerful commander, top American military officials put the option of killing him – which they viewed as the most extreme response to recent Iranian-led violence in Iraq – on the menu they presented to President Trump. They didn’t think he would take it. In the wars waged since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Pentagon officials have often offered improbable options to presidents to make other possibilities appear more palatable.”

“Top pentagon officials,” the Times reports, “were stunned” by the president’s order. Furthermore, the paper reported that “the intelligence” supposedly confirming Iranian plans to attack US diplomats was “thin,” in the words of at least one US military official who was privy to the administration’s deliberations. According to that source, there is no evidence of an “imminent” attack in the foreseeable future against American targets outside US borders.

US leaders have always obscured facts, distorted intelligence, and fabricated information to stoke public fears and build support for war. So it should come as no surprise that this president is politicizing intelligence. He certainly has reason to – in order to draw attention away from his Senate impeachment trial, and considering Trump’s increasingly desperate efforts to demonstrate that he is a serious president, not a tin-pot authoritarian who ignores the rule of law, while shamelessly coercing and extorting foreign leaders in pursuit of domestic electoral advantage.

Independent of the corruption charges against Trump, it is unwise for Americans to take the president at his word, considering the blatant lies employed in the post-9/11 era to justify war in the Middle East. Not so long ago the American public was sold a bill of goods regarding Iraq’s alleged WMDs and ties to terrorism. Neither of those claims was remotely true, and Americans were left footing the bill for a war that cost trillions, based on the lies of an opportunistic president who was dead-set on exploiting public fears of terrorism in a time of crisis.

The Bush administration sold war based on intelligence they knew was fraudulent, manipulating the nation into on a decade-long war that led to the murder of more than one million Iraqis and more than 5,000 American servicemen, resulting in a failed Iraqi state, and paving the way for the rise of Isis.

All of this is to say that the risks of beginning another war in the Middle East are incredibly high, and Americans would do well to seriously consider the consequences of entering a war based (yet again) on questionable intelligence.

Excerpted from: ‘Opposing War With Iran: Three Reasons’. Courtesy: Counterpunch.org