

Suzanne Schaefer: Okay, hi everybody. This is Suzanne Schaefer from the Brookings Institution, thank you all for joining us. Just before we get started I would ask that you please mute yourselves when you're not speaking. It's very important that you are on mute during this call so that we can get a recording that is free of background noise.

As a reminder this media call is on the record and is being recorded, so I will be sending everybody a transcript of this call as soon as it is available tomorrow. And I think that we will just go ahead and get started. We have three experts on the line here today; Suzanne Maloney, Dan Byman and Scott Anderson. We're going to kick things off with Suzanne Maloney, followed by Dan Byman and then Scott Anderson who will all give brief comments and after that we will open it up to you all on the line to ask any questions that you may have. So Suzanne, if you are ready, let's go ahead and get started.

Suzanne Maloney: Hi, thanks to everyone for joining us on the line. Obviously this is a quite a dramatic development in what has been a long simmering conflict between the United States and Iran.

I think to simply state the obvious, we have moved from, kind of, a shadow war and an economic war to a direct act of war by the Trump administration with the assassination of Qassem Soleimani. And it will have dramatic implications for both the bilateral dynamic and of course the regional environment.

Let me stick briefly to how I think the Iranians may respond. There's a lot of anxiety, you've been bordering, I think, in some places on hysteria about an immediate onslaught or backlash from Tehran. It's certainly possible, but I also think it's important to know that the Iranians have demonstrated a pretty well practice art of calibrating their retaliation around their real interests, which ultimately concerns regime survival. They will try to target their reprisals with some degree of deliberation and precision. You can look back historically, Iran has actually absorbed some major blows and setbacks about immediately yielding the temptation to strike back in some kind of reckless fashion.

They are very good at nurturing resentments, biding their time, in-fact, as far back to the 1988 downing, accidentally, by the US military of a civilian airliner. Or, the 2008 killing of a key Hezbollah operative.

In neither case did you see immediate reprisals from Iran, but over time the Iranian's have a way of making their feelings known. And I think it's even true of what we've seen over the course of the past year and a half, as the Trump administration has ratcheted up pressure on Iran. Obviously you all know that Iran waited nearly a year assessing its options before launching a series of counter attacks in and around the Gulf. And even then, Iran's pushed back was designed avoid civilian casualties or minimize any kind of catastrophic economic

damage. So I'd say don't be surprised if it takes time for the other shoe to drop. Iranian leaders are going to look for a time and place of their own choosing to wreak their vengeance and they're going to be looking for options that will promise the best prospects of both punishing Trump in some personalized fashion, I suspect, enhancing their own advantage and anything that, of course, might alleviate the siege on their own economy. They've got a lot of different options and I know that both Dan and Scott will fill in some the blanks that I'm leaving here. In terms of where the Iranians are most likely to push back. Let me just wrap up by saying a word or two about the kind of domestic implications for Iran. We're seeing, of course, the short term predictable impact of a rally around the flag effect. A larger than usual crowd at Friday prayers today in various Iranian cities. And I think that there will be some degree of nationalist backlash within the country.

But don't forget that Iran is really managing under a period of severe strain now. The protest that took place in November greatly unnerved both leadership and have left a deep well of resentment among Iranians who've never experienced anything quite like the, kind of, murderous rampages in the streets of major cities across the country. With reprisals and a crackdown that left hundreds, if not more than a thousand, dead. So it splintered some elements of the leadership in Iran.

Iranian leaders are all too aware of the widespread dissatisfaction with their own track record. I think, this will further temper their inclination to push the situation further up the escalatory spiral. The war during the 80s helped cement the revolutionary regime; helped to consolidate its power. Iranian leaders are very realistic and fairly shrewd in the way that they approach their threats, as well as their survival.

And I think that there's a keen recognition they're trying to take on a super power and a time of a tattered economy, and trade internal legitimacy is probably a step too far. So with that let me turn it over to Dan. And look forward to continuing the conversation.

Suzanne Schaefer:

And just really quickly for anybody who just joined us, please mute yourself when you're not speaking so that we can reduce background noise. But Dan if you'd like to take it away, please do.

Daniel Byman:

Sure. So let me add three points to what Suzanne's excellent beginning. So the first is that when Iran thinks about retaliation it has an extremely wide array of options. So, Iran has ties to, what do we call, the terrorist groups or militant groups, a wide array of actors around the Arab world and as well as the Muslim world. Quite active, of course, in a lot of fields so you have them in Afghanistan. It has ties to smaller groups in a number of countries in the region, and then when you look at a lot of the press records it has been linked to attacks in Argentina, to operations in Southeast Asia and also, of course, to attacks in

Europe and the middle East. So the, kind of, playing fields for the Iranians is vast.

The second thing I would highlight is, because of this vast playing field, the role of allies is going to be tremendously important; the United States is going to need allies and it's going to deter Iran from a much more dangerous escalation, it's going to need ally's it can watch. If the United States, itself, wants to escalate it could either support. And the one problem the United States has had in the middle East is that it's often acted in disregard for allies; it's [inaudible 00:10:01]. And that could be quite costly as the United States is upping the confrontation with Iraq.

And this leads to the third point, which is, I'm very concerned that there may have been a lack of, kind of, fore-thinking, advanced planning with regard to this operation. This is a game changing operation it may be the right move because actually if US forces were in immediate danger. But it's something that dramatically re-calibrates a lot of our thinking about the response of the regions. And if so, it's going to require the United States to be thinking about the long-term, to be thinking about what it wants to achieve in the region. And so far this administration has had kind of very grandiose, very big rhetoric's, but has actually tried to reduce the US role in the region. And, what they've done right now is made a very big play and I'm worried they're making it with a very weak hand.

Suzanne Schaefer: Okay great, thank you Dan. Scott, if you'd like to say your piece.

Scott Anderson: I will just supplement what Dan and Suzanne said with two supplemental points. One on legal authorities and one on Iraq. From the legal authorities perspective, we still have not, unless it's come up in the last hour and I haven't seen it, seen a really detailed layout of exactly what the domestic international legal basis is, action is. There's discussions of there being a self-defense action, defensive, US troops did leave this morning and that could feed into a number of legal theories, so we haven't seen a really clear view. We should play out the kind of different authorities that seem available to them.

It definitely seems like this is an action that pushes the envelope in a number of regards, both on a domestic and international law. I'm not sure that describing it as illegal or unlawful is necessarily correct because the legal questions tend to be defused through a highly deferential lens to the executives. And involve legal authorities that are subject to a great deal of executive branch interpretation, but it certainly goes a bit further than this administration has indicated it intended to go in a variety of dimensions.

And that half the administrations have gone on a number of dimensions. So lots of weight, a little bit to give more details on that. I can dig deeper if that's of particular interest to people and I should have, hopefully, haven't picked up on a warfare. Getting into more detail on that in an hour or two. In regards to Iraq;

obviously this is not just a two way conflict, in a way, it has become a three way conflict. Because the strike against Soleimani took place on Iraqi soil and in Baghdad, an area very central to Iraqi sovereignty in a lot of ways. This really is a pivotal moment in the US Iraq relationship. In a way it is one of the greatest challenges it has faced, really, in recent years, probably since 2011. And the potential to withdraw negotiations, for the simple reason that United States was very clearly given consent for US military presence there to combat ISIS.

They were specifically asked not to involve themselves in actions targeting Iran and they appear to have done so. In a bit of a [inaudible 00:14:02] fashion admittedly in self-defense, by some claims. Although one can raise some questions about that as well as can be attenuated, potentially attenuated relationship between a direct threat and this particular action. Although there may be more information on that forthcoming.

From the Iraqis perspective this is going to put a lot of pressure on those aspects of our relationship. They have control over, the number one of those is the U S military presence and I strongly suspect we're going to see action in the parliament or perhaps even the prime minister's office. Most likely the parliament that's going to seek the curtailment if not total withdrawal of those folks. Some of which may have to happen for security reasons regardless, given that the security environment in Iraq seems to have...

If you've very dangerously given the order that all US citizens try to depart as quickly as possible. So with those two points, I guess I'll, I'll open up the questions.

Suzanne Schaefer: Okay, thank you Scott. We're going to open it up to you guys on the line, now. Please just introduce yourselves before you ask your questions. Again, make sure to mute yourself after you ask your questions. Anybody who has questions, please phrase them now.

Trudy Rubin: Trudy Rubin from the Philadelphia Inquirer. Hi, thanks so much to all of you. I'd like to ask you what you think at this point would be a wise US ends goal? Do you think the US is out for regime change? Or do you see any end goal that is achievable? Or does this just take us into a long-term, more high-tension standoff with Iran?

Suzanne Maloney: I think it certainly escalates the tension. I don't see any immediate prospects of a breakthrough, either ... or any real clarification of what American policy is. I think there's been a pretty clear theory of the case under the Trump administration which is that hit Iran hard if you want to see some kind of effect on its calculations. They have continued to ratchet up economic pressure. It appeared that was the only tool they were willing to deploy. What we've seen over the course of the past 24 hours, or more arguably over the course of the past week is a newfound risk tolerance which I think is going to create some

need for recalculation on the Iranian part. They thought they had Trump figured out. I think it's no longer clear that they did.

Chris Megerian: This is Chris Megerian at Los Angeles Times. I had another question about the Iranian domestic global situation. Suzanne, you mentioned at the beginning that there's this internal debate over how tough of a line they should take against the US at this point. Can you elaborate on that a little bit, and how you think they could play out, as far as retaliation?

Suzanne Maloney: Yeah, look, the rhetoric is pretty uniform at this stage, promising that there will be a very high price to be paid. I don't think there should be any illusion that there's a public deliberation around where and how to respond. I'm simply basing this on the sort of historical track record of the Iranians in terms of the way that they have handled prior periods when they've been hit hard, as well as some appreciation of the fact that this is ... We often use a lot of fiery rhetoric ourselves when we talk about Iran, but in fact, there is a strategic calculus that guides Iranian foreign policy, regional policy, and a push to the United States.

I think we've seen a fairly precise and calibrated set of reprisals since May of this year when President Trump sought to bring Iran's oil revenues down to zero. They've done it in a way that's avoided civilian casualties, that has not produced massive economic damage that wasn't immediately reparable to their neighbors. They've done it, I think successfully in terms of generating new diplomatic leverage and urgency around their situation.

I think they will look to respond, but to respond with the objective of advancing their own position, and avoiding anything that endangers the regime.

Chris Megerian: Just one quick thing, domestically, is there an appetite for a drawn-out war, or a conflict with the United States in Iran?

Suzanne Maloney: I absolutely do not think there is an appetite either at a leadership level, and certainly not at a popular level. For a war with the United States, the Iranians understand better than anyone the nature of the disparity and capabilities between their military and the United States. They prefer to take the battle to American interests elsewhere through their unconventional capabilities, rather than to try to take on an overwhelmingly superior conventional military force.

Chris Megerian: Thank you.

Warren Strobel: Hey, this is Warren Strobel with the Wall Street Journal. Thanks for doing this, I wanted to as Dan in particular how this affects the fight against ISIS. There was tacit cooperation between the US and PMF and Rock and going after ISIS. Of course, they're regenerating in parts of Iraq like Diyālā province and Kirkuk and elsewhere.

Daniel Byman:

There is a bit of good news in that Iran in particular has strong interest in going after ISIS on its own. Whether that's working with its allies in Syria, whether it's working with various PMF, other Rocky groups that ... Well, the Iraqi found the key to expand the influence of the Syrian government, they'll want to go after these ISIS pockets. There are domestic reasons, especially on the Iraqi side to keep going after that. That said, to the point, the implicit cooperation or the time more than that, that's likely to diminish or end completely, at least in the short term.

There will, of course, be [inaudible 00:20:30] there'll be fears that by giving away positions, the United States might be robbing them. More probably, I think, both sides will start to think about other enemies, and in particular each other. Part of what brought this together several years ago was the sense that ISIS is a danger to both, is a very strong danger. Now the Caliphate is forced on the ground. It might be trying to reconstitute itself, but it's still dramatically weaker than it was four years ago. They'll both be looking at who opposes [inaudible 00:21:00] and with the Irani story, this is proof, from the Irani point of view, that's going to be the United States. Any retaliation from Iran is going to be proof that, from a US point of view, that Iran remains the regional boogeyman.

I think that's one of the impacts. I don't think it'll be overwhelming, but I think it will have an impact.

Aaron Mehta:

Hey, guys, Aaron Mehta with Defense News here, thanks for doing this. Two questions. First, I'm wondering what role you guys see for cyber in terms of potential Iranian response. How key it might be. Whether it might be a way to ... More of that direct conflict you talked about. Secondly, I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts on what the potential surge of US forces back into the region might mean for the National Defense Strategy and the idea of trying to move forces out of the Middle East and focus on China and Russia. Do you see any long-term impact on that? Thanks.

Daniel Byman:

This is Dan. Let me start by talking briefly about the cyber and ask others to join in and discuss the other issues. On the cyber, there are some advantages to it in that it can be a way of limiting escalation. There's often a sense of ... Into all sides that there might be cyber competition, but that it doesn't go always into the physical realm. That said, for that very reason, it's less visually satisfying. When you're trying to play to a domestic audience, when you're trying to reassure various proxy groups and say, "They killed one of ours, so we took down a website." Or, "We caused some problems with their financial system." That might be very frustrating from the US point of view, and it might be something that we do for that region as part of the ... Excuse me that reason as part of a broader effort.

It's not going to have the same kind of catharsis and, from their point of view, deterrent effect as actual violence. I can see it as a possibility, but not as a replacement for more traditional forms of violence.

Suzanne Schaefer: Next question.

Aaron Mehta: Sorry, it's Aaron again, just on the follow-up on the National Defense Strategy and the question of if we're able to really focus on China and Russia, given that the situation seems to be escalating now.

Daniel Byman: I'll take another stab. This has been something that the Obama administration wanted to do as well, was to try to reduce the US emphasis and presence in the Middle East to focus on other dangers. In the Obama Administration's case, the rise in China. The Middle East does have this habit of sucking the United States back in. I will say under Trump it's very much, though, a question mark. He's already said today that maybe US Forces should be leaving Iraq if they're not wanted there. It's quite possible to me that the Trump administration would escalate, would do this very aggressive operation, yet at the same time be trying to leave.

I think that's a mistake, which is you're trying to ... You're creating a much more dangerous situation, and then you're bending allies as you're doing so. I think it's quite plausible that Trump himself, who tends to be very impetuous in his decision-making, very instinctive might be thinking this way.

Aaron Meadow: That's great.

Trudy Rubin: Trudy Ruben, if no one else wants, I'd like to ask another question. Just a follow-up on the Iraq piece, if US troops were asked to leave, and Trump were eager to do so, what do you think would be the impact of US troops leaving Iraq, and also what would be the impact on Syria with that ... Of necessity meaning the rest of the small presence would leave there. Also, in Iraq, how do you think the nationalist protesters that have been out in the cities, and have been both against Iran being there, and against US presence. How will they take this, and what impact might that have on those demonstrations?

Scott Anderson: Sure. Let me take your second question first, and then work backwards. I think it's hard to generalize how the protesters are going to respond to this. It is a very diverse movement. In some ways it's got different demands and interests, even if they do have a united populace at the front, to some extent, right now. We saw Secretary Pompeo obviously circulate those videos of protesters celebrating the death of Soleimani, and there will be some elements of that. Remember these are individuals who have suffered really atrocious violence at the hands at a lot of the groups that Soleimani helped lead, fund, organize and direct in Iraq over the last four months or so, five months. I think seeing him fall is a real sign of the vulnerability of Iran, and particularly of the Iranian [inaudible]

00:26:00] in Iraq, and the fact that they're not invincible, and they can be defeated with a bloody nose. It's understandable they would celebrate.

At the same time, I wouldn't show it, take it as a sign that there is still excitement about more US efforts trying to direct the political outcome there. At least in regards to the December 29th strikes, some of my contacts, Iraqi contacts have more contacts with folks in Iraq know that you really knew some people who were sympathetic to the [inaudible 00:26:33] were killed, because a lot of them are young, working-level guys. Fast guys out at these posts in Syria who are not the main commanders or leaders in these earlier strike.

There's obviously change in the most recent strike, and maybe there's more sympathy for that. Again, I wouldn't take this as a sign that as Senator Pompeo seems to be trying to signal that this is Iraqis allowing to support the American action and position. Instead, it the celebration of the death of someone who caused them a lot of pain. I wouldn't read much politically into that.

In regards to the US troop withdrawal, US troops are in Iraq with Iraq's consent to aid them in combating ISIS and in strengthening their own military forces. That's really supposed to be the full extent of their mission. Their withdrawal of US forces from there, it's going to hurt both of those missions. It's going to be harder to deter ISIS stuff in Iraq, although as Dan notes, there is an incentive for other parties to pick up that work, both in Iraq and Syria. It's going to be harder to fortify the Iraqi military. We saw how rapidly the Iraqi military really degraded in the years prior to the rise of ISIS. That really contributed to ISIS's rapid march through, down, almost all the way to Baghdad in 2013.

I think the concern has always been that, without continuing to support and training and encouragement, you would see a similar degradation of the Iraqi military core. That may yet come about. Specifically with regard to the ISIS operation in Syria, we do know that after the Trump administration moved US troops out of northern Syria, a bunch out of Syria, they did say, "Well, we're going to rely more heavily on cross-border operations against ISIS from Iraq," so the withdrawal of US troops from there would put a major hindrance on that sort of operation. Who also have difficult relations with Turkey right now, which could be another base for such operations, but that seems highly unlikely. I suspect it's going to make those operations much more difficult to execute more expenses, and rarer for that reason, the whole effort less effective.

Doesn't mean you still won't be able to pull it off sometimes, but it's going to be extra challenging without Iraq available as an operating base. Dan, do you have anything to add to that? This is up your alley, more than mine.

Daniel Byman:

No, I think you nailed it very neatly, that there's no question it's going to degrade the US ability to go after the [inaudible 00:29:04] remnants. I would add it also sends the broader message about whether legal allies should be listening to the United States in all the regions. The United States has kind of



pushed Turkey, it's pushed Israel, it's pushed Saudi Arabia over the years to do different things with regard to counter-terrorism as the goal. Part of that was because what they [inaudible 00:29:26] in the sense that the United States had skin in the game.

With the US basically stirring the pot, and then perhaps leaving, or at least drawing out its presence, it sent a message to allies that they're going to be on their own. They need to take care of things by themselves, and [inaudible 00:29:43] that I think there's a real chance they may work across purposes in places like Syria, Iraq or other areas where Iran and the Islamic state are active.

Franco Ordonez: Hi, yeah, hello. Yeah, this is Frankie with Christian Science Monitor. Following up on what Dan was just saying there, you're talking about allies. I wanted to ask you, you said earlier that going forward in this confrontation with Iran, that the US is going to be needing allies and clearly at the same time Iran is going to be pressing internationally, the image of the US acting unilaterally and a danger and all. And so how do you see that kind of battle, that more diplomatic battle playing out and who's going to win the battle of the allies.

Daniel Byman: I'll ask Suzanne to weigh in as well. Historically at least Iran has done very poorly on Iranian terrorist attacks and general aggressive behavior. That meant that even countries that weren't supportive of the Bush administration or the Obama administration were not terribly sympathetic towards the Iranians. In any event, the United States is a super power. And there are very few countries willing to go to the last steps, to super power general. And if they're going to do so, it's not going to be over helping Iran.

All that said, I think the situation is less favorable for the United States assembled arm. If the US withdraws from the Iran nuclear deal, there was a sense among very close US allies that this was a huge mistake, that the United States was pushing a lot of towards war, that it was the United States that was more bellicose, not the Iranians. And then because this plan seems to be the US acting aggressively rather than a clear response, that everyone can agree on. There could be a sense that the United States is creating conflict where it doesn't need to exist. So I don't think it's causing a rally to the Iranians, but I think people are going to be very broad in their support of the United States. And if the United States is looking for UN support or NATO support, I think it's going to be very difficult to attack.

Scott Anderson: I would add just one thing on that. Dan, did you want to add something? Sorry I didn't want to interrupt you.

Suzanne Maloney: Go ahead. I'll chime in after you finish up.

Scott Anderson: Oh, I would just add, I entirely agree with everything Dan said. The one thing I would also add to this is, it appears, as far as we can tell, the Trump administration really did not provide advanced notice of this operation to the British, to the

Australians, the Danes, other people who have been closely involved, certainly in the counter ISIS mission, many have installed personnel in Iraq and Syria let alone to other allies and abroad or wide. I think that's going to be a major point of discontent even though they may remain a quiet one of among allies.

Allies of the United States are going to be a likely target for any sort of reprisal, as much as the United States is, or almost as much at least. And in many cases they are as vulnerable if not more vulnerable and not having the opportunity to kind of prepare and think about an adequate response. I think it's going to be another kind of grievance that's added to a growing list with the Trump administration and how its approach, its relationships with some of these strategic partners. Again, I highly doubt it's going to be a game changer on its own, but it does add to the pile here. And particularly if there is a reply against somebody, an ally in the near term, that could be particularly problematic. Although you know, I think the window for that is probably passing quickly as those governments now have had a chance to respond.

Suzanne Schaefer: Dan did you want to reply?

Suzanne Maloney: I think the only point I want to just reinforce...

Suzanne Schaefer: We've got the music coming through. Is there..? Thank you.

Suzanne Maloney: There we go.

...is just the imminence of a new crisis over the nuclear deal. The Iranians were already poised to announce the next steps in terms of their own wind down of their obligations under the agreement which they've been doing incrementally, again since May, as a means of trying to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Trump administration's walk away from the deal. I think we can expect that if there is a short term dramatic response, it could come around those nuclear steps. If we are facing the full-fledged collapse of the deal in the near term, the fact that we are so dramatically at odds with all of our partners and negotiating that deal, is going to make it very difficult for us to deal with the perspective urgency around, and Iran could appear to be racing toward a bomb.

Suzanne Schaefer: Thank you. All right. We have about five more minutes. If anybody has any final questions.

Daniel Franklin: I'm Daniel Franklin here from the Economist. Thank you very much. Those were all very informative. You said, I think this design, you said early on that Iran has a history of biding its time for its response. Do you have a sense of the extent to which the American act was itself, a short term response to what's been happening just now or whether it too has been biding it's the time, for example, the attacks on Saudi or opposite as is.

- Suzanne Maloney: I don't think I'd be able to speak to that with accuracy, but we know of course that the Iranis themselves have acknowledged there had been prior attempts on Soleimani's life, and this is a part of his cult of personality to some extent, but I think there are confirmed reports that at various points the Obama administration had him in their sights and opted not to strike. So this can hardly come as a surprise and it has to have been on the list of possible options over the course of many years given his stature and his role in orchestrating Iran's involvement in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere.
- Suzanne Schaefer: Are there any other questions?
- Michael Gelman: Yeah, Michael Gelman. Is there any evidence that the Israeli intelligence were assisting in this case and how concerned should the Israelis be at this point?
- Daniel Byman: I have known either way on any of the intelligence involved here, so I'll begin with that. I would say though, Israel should be very concerned for a number of reasons. First that Iran and Syria and Hezbollah has the ability to reach Israel. Iran has made an effort to case Israeli targets. The history of going after Israeli facilities and people around the world. So that's always a possibility, but especially in a time of attack.
- In addition, Israel is a popular enemy. So by going after Israel, they might even have the ability to make this a Muslim struggle against the Zion centerpiece, rather than of the United States, and put US allies in the region, like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and more uncomfortable struggle. All that said, the of focus of the Iranis is going to be on the United States, on American assets, on the top in particular. So I think Israel should be concerned, but the primary concern should be, by the end.
- Trudy Rubin: Could I just follow up on a point that Suzanne just made about the potential collapse of the nuclear deal. There's a deadline coming up on the 6th of January, isn't there? Do you think Iran is likely to jump to 20%? And if so, is that dramatic enough then to trigger a counter response from the US or Israel? Do you think?
- Suzanne Maloney: Look, it's 48 hours. I think we can wait and see exactly what happens. I'm sure the Iranians are...
- Trudy Rubin: I'm writing today!
- Suzanne Maloney: I think that's certainly among the likely possibilities. But the question, the greater concern I have is stuff that would be more difficult to reverse or that would have short term impact on international transparency, and to Iran's nuclear activities like turning off cameras or forcing out inspectors, things like this. So there are variety of steps that they can take. And this will be meant to send a signal, and at the same time I think the Iranians will be careful to appreciate that they may have had put greater distance between the United

States and its partners. And they will want to keep that distance there rather than positioning themselves in opposition to the other parties to the deal.

Suzanne Schaefer: All right, thank you. If there's anybody who has not yet asked the question, who would like to make a final comment, please do so now otherwise we'll end here.

Dan Friedman: Hi, this is Dan Friedman with Mother Jones. Just really generally, was this a mistake? Should they not have done this? Is that something you guys are saying in this call? Thank you.

Scott Anderson: I would say that there's a lot of, it depends. So one, it depends, was how serious and how imminent the threat to the US forces is to be. The Trump administration is claiming that Soleimani was planning something big? If so, that should be thought of as extremely dangerous, and our response is appropriate. But also very important is doing this in a considerate way. So that's going to involve plans with allies, that could involve being prepared for Iran. It's going to involve knowing where will acclimate and even where we fall and what we want to achieve. And this administration's track record of diplomacy is exceptionally poor. This track record of planning is exceptionally poor. So I'm worried that this is necessary to make this an appropriate sensible move for lacking. But there's a lot I don't know at this point.

Yeah, I'll weigh and say, I tend to think I can imagine scenarios where a similar sort of action might be more reasonable under the facts as we know them, at least. I think this threshold is very high and I suspect this wasn't a fake. If for no other reason than by pursuing this action in Iraq, the Trump administration really has put on the line a major component of USs regional policy that we sunk a great effort in, and that's probably going to be very hard to recover, and damage it perhaps irreparably for this action. There are a lot of facts we don't know. I'm not going to put dye on the hill, that this was an absolute mistake until I get those facts. But I think the threshold of pursuing such a provocative action with such a high cost has to be very high. And I have teased the case made that this met that threshold, or that Dan mentioned, that there was the requisite policy process and careful consideration that should go into any decision with such gravity.

Suzanne Maloney: My short answer is that we need more facts about both the deliberation and the set of circumstances led to the decision. But I think that sort of reflects the denunciations on the part of those who are concerned about inevitable spirals toward war aren't helpful. And I will not mourn Soleimani's staff.

Suzanne Schaefer: All right. Thank you. Thank you Suzanne, Dan and Scott for joining us. As I mentioned at the start of the call, we will have a transcript for you as soon as possible, which I will send around. Scott, I will also send you the list of people who have RSVP'd so you have everybody's name, but I think with that, we'll go ahead and end it here. Thank you to everybody for joining us.