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Article 1.

NYT

U.S. Defines Its Demands for New Round of Talks With Iran

[David E. Sanger](#) and [Steven Erlanger](#)

April 7, 2012 — The Obama administration and its European allies plan to open new negotiations with [Iran](#) by demanding the immediate closing and ultimate dismantling of a recently completed nuclear facility deep under a mountain, according to American and European diplomats. They are also calling for a halt in the production of uranium fuel that is considered just a few steps from bomb grade, and the shipment of existing stockpiles of that fuel out of the country, the diplomats said.

That negotiating position will be the opening move in what [President Obama](#) has called Iran's "last chance" to resolve its nuclear confrontation with the United Nations and the West diplomatically. The hard-line approach would require the country's military leadership to give up the Fordo enrichment plant outside the holy city of Qum, and with it a huge investment in the one facility that is most hardened against airstrikes. While it is unclear whether the allies would accept anything less than closing and disassembling Fordo, government and outside experts say the terms may be especially difficult for Iran's leaders to accept when they need to appear strong in the face of political infighting. Still, Mr. Obama and his allies are gambling that crushing sanctions and the threat of Israeli military action will bolster the arguments of those Iranians who say a negotiated settlement is far preferable to isolation and more financial hardship. Other experts fear the tough conditions being set could instead swing the debate in favor of Iran's hard-liners. "We have no idea how the Iranians will react," one senior administration official said. "We probably won't know after the first meeting." But the next round of oil sanctions, he noted, kicks in early this summer.

The bitter tension among competing factions inside Iran's leadership, only some of it related to the nuclear issue, may explain the country's continued haggling about the venue of the talks, planned for Friday. In recent days, Iran has changed its position and balked at holding them in Istanbul, demanding a move to what Tehran calls more neutral territory, like Iraq or China. The shift has underscored doubts among Obama administration officials and their European partners about Iran's readiness to negotiate seriously and to finally answer questions from international nuclear inspectors about its program's "possible military dimensions."

Those questions are based in part on evidence that Iran may have worked on warhead designs and nuclear triggers. In what may be a sign of the competing, and sometimes confusing, views in Iran, a leading lawmaker, Gholamreza Mesbahi Moghadam, said on Friday that his country “has the scientific and technological capability” to produce a nuclear weapon “but will never choose this path.” The statement appeared to be an effort to put Iran in the company of nuclear-capable states that have committed not to produce a weapon, like Japan. But the statement, which appeared on the Parliament’s Web site, was taken down by late Saturday, possibly signaling discord. There is disagreement among the Western allies about whether Iran’s leaders have made a political decision to pursue a nuclear weapon. American intelligence agencies have stuck to a 2007 intelligence assessment, which found that Iran suspended research on [nuclear weapons](#) technology in 2003 and has not decided to take the final steps needed to build a bomb. But Britain and Israel in particular, looking at essentially the same evidence, say that they believe a decision has been made to move to a nuclear-weapons capability, if not to a weapon itself. Some American officials say they have considerable confidence that if Iran moves to build a weapon, they will detect the signs in time to take military action, though others — notably former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates — have been more skeptical. American and Israeli officials say they have been more successful in the past few years in intelligence gathering in Iran, both from human sources and [drone aircraft, like the stealth RQ-170 Sentinel that was lost over Iran late last year](#). While opening bids in international negotiations are often designed to set a high bar, as a political matter American and European officials say they cannot imagine agreeing to any outcome that leaves Iran with a stockpile of fuel, enriched to 20 percent purity, that could be converted to bomb grade in a matter of months. The outcome of the talks — or their breakdown — could well determine whether Washington will be able to quiet Israeli threats that it could take military action this year. But talking with Iran’s leaders also carries considerable political risk for Mr. Obama, with Iran emerging as one of the few major foreign policy issues in the presidential campaign. If Iran rejects American and European demands to immediately halt the most dangerous elements of its program, Mr. Obama could face a crisis in the Persian Gulf by early summer in the midst of his re-election

bid. “This may be the most complex negotiation I’ve ever seen the president enter,” one senior administration official said last week. “It’s got the Democrats and Republicans looking to score points, the Russians and the Chinese trying to water down the sanctions, the French pushing for harsher actions and the Israelis threatening to take the program out.” European allies, especially the French and the British, say they are concerned that Mr. Obama will want to keep the negotiations going, however unproductive they might be, through the November presidential election to avoid the possibility of a military strike if the talks fail. Israel and some European leaders fear that would play into what they perceive as Iran’s strategy to use the talks to buy time while its centrifuges keep spinning. In interviews, administration officials said their “urgent priority” was to get Iran to give up — and ship out of the country — its stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent purity, and to get Tehran to close Fordo. Dismantlement, they said, would come in a second stage. So far Iran has produced only about 100 kilograms of 20 percent-enriched uranium — less than it would need to produce a single nuclear weapon — but it has announced plans to increase production sharply in coming months.

It is unclear whether that is possible: sanctions, embargos on crucial parts and Western sabotage have all delayed the program. But because that fuel could be so quickly converted to highly enriched uranium for a bomb, the American and European strategy is to eliminate that stockpile, leaving time to negotiate on the fate of lower-enriched uranium. Uranium enriched to about 5 percent does not pose as imminent a risk, but the United Nations Security Council has required that Iran halt all enrichment. “Our position is clear: Iran must live up to its international obligations, including full suspension of uranium enrichment as required by multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions,” Tommy Vietor, spokesman for the National Security Council, said Friday. Others, however, are more willing to allow Iran some enrichment capabilities. “What we are looking for is a way to acknowledge Iran’s right to enrich, but only at levels that would give us plenty of warning if they moved toward a weapon,” one European diplomat familiar with the internal debates said. Iran claims the right to enrich uranium as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which allows nations to pursue civilian

nuclear power. The West says that Iran has breached its commitments by refusing to answer questions from the International Atomic Energy Agency and refusing to comply with Security Council mandates. While the six nations in the talks — Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany — are prepared to allow Iran to have a nuclear power program, they say Iran must first restore its credibility and prove that it does not in fact have a military [nuclear program](#). It can do so, they say, by allowing agency inspectors full access to all Iranian sites. Iran has refused to do so, and has barred the inspectors from talking to key nuclear scientists.

The Western negotiators all agree that in the first round of talks, Iran must prove its willingness to discuss its nuclear program without preconditions. In the last talks in January 2011, Tehran demanded that the six first lift all sanctions against Iran and recognize what Iran says is its “right to enrich.” Last week, apparently in preparation for the meeting, Mr. Obama delivered a message to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, through an intermediary: Turkey’s prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Mr. Erdogan met Mr. Obama during a summit meeting in Seoul late last month and then went directly to northeastern Iran. The message, American officials said, was that “there is great urgency” that Iran seriously negotiate now. But it is unclear how specific Mr. Erdogan may have been about the consequences of continued nuclear development.

Article 2.

Washington Post

U.S. intelligence gains in Iran seen as boost to confidence

[Joby Warrick](#) and [Greg Miller](#)

April 8 -- More than three years ago, the CIA dispatched a stealth surveillance drone into the skies over Iran. The bat-winged aircraft penetrated more than 600 miles inside the country, captured images of Iran’s secret nuclear facility at Qom and then flew home. All the while,

analysts at the CIA and other agencies watched carefully for any sign that the craft, dubbed the [RQ-170 Sentinel](#), had been detected by Tehran's air defenses on its maiden voyage.

"There was never even a ripple," said a former senior U.S. intelligence official involved in the previously undisclosed mission.

CIA stealth drones scoured dozens of sites throughout Iran, making hundreds of passes over suspicious facilities, before a version of the RQ-170 [crashed inside Iran's borders](#) in December. The surveillance has been part of what current and former U.S. officials describe as an intelligence surge that is aimed at Iran's nuclear program and that has been gaining momentum since the final years of George W. Bush's administration. The effort has included ramped-up eavesdropping by the National Security Agency, formation of an Iran task force among satellite-imagery analysts and an expanded network of spies, current and former U.S. officials said. At a time of renewed debate over whether stopping Iran might require military strikes, the expanded intelligence collection has reinforced the [view within the White House](#) that it will have early warning of any move by Iran to assemble a nuclear bomb, officials said. "There is confidence that we would see activity indicating that a decision had been made," said a senior U.S. official involved in high-level discussions about Iran policy. "Across the board, our access has been significantly improved."

The expanded intelligence effort has coincided with a covert campaign by the CIA and other agencies to sabotage Iran's nuclear program and has enabled an escalation in the use of [targeted economic sanctions](#) by the United States and its allies to weaken Iran's resolve. The Obama administration has cited new intelligence reports in arguing against a preemptive military strike by Israel against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Israeli officials have pushed for a more aggressive response to Iran's nuclear activities, arguing that Iran is nearing what some officials have called a "zone of immunity," in which Iran can quickly complete the final steps toward becoming a nuclear power inside heavily fortified bunkers protected from Israeli airstrikes. White House officials contend that Iran's leaders have not decided to build a nuclear weapon, and they say it would take Iran at least a year to do so if it were to launch a crash program now. "Even in the absolute worst case — six months — there is time for the president to have options," said the senior U.S. official, one of seven

current or former advisers on security policy who agreed to discuss U.S. options on Iran on the condition of anonymity.

The improved intelligence also strengthens the administration's bargaining position ahead of nuclear talks with Iran, tentatively scheduled for Friday. The United States and five other countries — Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany — are expected to press Iran to accept curbs on its nuclear program that would make it far more difficult for the country to build a nuclear weapon. A key demand, Western diplomats say, is for Iran to halt production at its uranium enrichment plant at Qom, which was built in mountain tunnels beyond the reach of all but the most advanced bombs and missiles. In return for such a concession, Iran could be allowed to keep some semblance of a commercial nuclear power program under heavy international oversight, diplomats say. It is unclear, however, whether Iran would agree to restrictions on its program. In recent days, Iran has refused even to commit to a venue for the talks. The CIA declined to comment on the nature of its operations against Iran. Officials familiar with the operations, however, acknowledged that there had been some setbacks and conceded that aspects of Iran's nuclear decision-making remain opaque, including the calculations made by the Islamic republic's senior political and clerical leadership. Iranian officials insist publicly that the program is for peaceful energy production. But experts skeptical of that explanation warn that Iran may become more adept at hiding parts of its nuclear program, particularly if it succeeds in building more powerful centrifuges that can enrich uranium in smaller, dispersed facilities.

“They have been taken off-guard in the past, and now they do their best to conceal,” said [Olli Heinonen](#), who formerly directed nuclear inspections inside Iran for the International Atomic Energy Agency. While Western spy agencies have been successful of late, he said, “they are shooting at a moving target.”

The still-fresh sting of Iraq

There is also the chastening experience of Iraq. A decade ago, analysts at the CIA and other agencies were confident that Iraq had stockpiles of banned weapons, including the components of a nuclear weapons program. A costly U.S. invasion and futile search for those stockpiles proved them wrong. The sting of that intelligence failure was still fresh

when U.S. spy agencies came under pressure to ramp up collection efforts against Iran. By 2006, U.S. intelligence officials and top Bush advisers had become alarmed by deep gaps in U.S. knowledge of Iran's nuclear efforts and ambitions. Michael V. Hayden, then the new CIA director, recalled a White House briefing in which Bush became visibly agitated. At the time, Iran was rapidly expanding its stockpile of enriched uranium at its main Natanz facility while working on what was then a secret site at Qom. American officials feared that Iran might surprise the world with a nuclear weapons test that would leave U.S. leaders with two highly unpalatable options: Attack Iran or accept the emergence of a new nuclear power in the Middle East. At one point, Bush turned to Hayden and said, "I don't want any U.S. president to be faced with only two choices when it comes to Iran," according to Hayden. Efforts to reach Bush for comment were not successful.

The meeting became the impetus for overhauling the CIA's approach to a country considered one of its hardest targets. The agency's Iran experts and operatives were moved from its Near East Division to a group focused exclusively on Iran, much as the CIA had formed its Counterterrorism Center 20 years earlier. "We put the best people on the job and put the most talented people in charge," Hayden said. "Then we said, 'Tell us what you need to get the job done.' "

Known internally as "Persia House," the Iran Operations Division was set up in the agency's Old Headquarters Building. Over time, it swelled from several dozen analysts and officers to several hundred. The division is now headed by a veteran case officer who previously served as CIA station chief in Islamabad, Pakistan.

"It got a robust budget," said a former senior CIA official who worked in the Near East Division at the time. The Iran division's emphasis was "getting people overseas in front of people they needed to be in front of — there are a lot of places to meet Iranians outside Iran." The division began assembling an informant network that stretched from the Middle East to South America, where Iran's security services have a long-standing presence. The CIA also exploited the massive U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq to mount espionage operations against the country sandwiched between those war zones.

Limited damage

One of those operations was exposed last year, when an RQ-170, flown from an airstrip in Afghanistan, crashed inside Iran. Officials in Tehran have triumphantly claimed credit for bringing the stealth drone down and have released pictures showing the drone apparently patched up after the crash. U.S. officials say a technical failure caused the crash. The former intelligence official familiar with the beginnings of the stealth drone missions said that there had been pointed debate before deploying the first aircraft over whether it should be equipped with a so-called self-destruction package, which could blow an RQ-170 to bits if it flew off course.

The director of national intelligence at the time, Michael McConnell, was among the high-ranking officials who pushed to have the package installed. But the CIA's engineering team balked, saying it would add too much weight to the delicately balanced frame.

Despite the setback, U.S. officials said that some surveillance flights continue and that the damage to American espionage capacity overall has been limited.

That is partly because the drone flights were only a small part of a broad espionage campaign involving the NSA, which intercepts e-mail and electronic communications, as well as the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, which scours satellite imagery and was the first to spot the uranium enrichment plant at Qom.

The CIA's expanded efforts continued under director Leon E. Panetta, who built partnerships with allied intelligence services in the region capable of recruiting operatives for missions inside Iran, former intelligence officials said.

The agency has encountered problems. [Shahram Amiri](#), an Iranian defector and scientist in the country's nuclear program, had been given \$5 million by the CIA and relocated to Tucson. But in 2010, he abandoned his American life and returned to Tehran — where he had a young son — giving Iranian officials not only a propaganda victory but probably information on what his CIA debriefers were most desperate to learn. U.S. officials said Amiri had been handled by the CIA's Counter-proliferation Division after he approached U.S. officials in Vienna and volunteered to spy. That division continues to handle scientists and technical experts connected to Iran's program, while Persia House focuses

on leadership figures and the nation's sprawling military and security services, including the Republican Guard Corps.

"The real damage was image — we looked like the Keystone Kops," said a former senior CIA official of Amiri's return to Iran. "In terms of actual damage — no, we collected all kinds of great stuff."

The expanded espionage effort has confirmed the consensus view expressed by the U.S. intelligence community in a controversial estimate released publicly in 2007. That estimate concluded that while Iran remains resolutely committed to assembling key building blocks for a nuclear weapons program, particularly enriched uranium, the nation's leaders have opted for now against taking the crucial final step: designing a nuclear warhead.

"It isn't the absence of evidence, it's the evidence of an absence," said one former intelligence official briefed on the findings. "Certain things are not being done."

Article 3.

Wall Street Journal

Iran's Spymaster Counters U.S. Moves in the Mideast

[Jay Solomon](#) and [Siobhan Gorman](#)

April 6, 2012 -- In the smoldering geopolitical feud between the U.S. and Iran, spymaster Major-General Qasem Soleimani is emerging as director of the Islamic Republic's effort to spread its influence abroad and bedevil the West.

In January, Gen. Soleimani—commander of Iran's elite overseas forces—traveled in secret to Damascus to meet with Syria's president and architect of that nation's bloody and continuing Arab Spring crackdown. At the meeting, Gen. Soleimani agreed to send more military aid and reaffirmed Iran's close friendship, according to U.S. and Arab officials.

In February, American officials detected four Iranian jets ferrying munitions to Syria. On Sunday the Obama administration announced it would start providing communications equipment to Syria's opposition, while Arab states committed to paying the salaries of rebel fighters.

While it is tough to know the precise inner workings of Iran's political machine, Gen. Soleimani's role in Syria is the latest indication that he ranks among the most important figures driving Iranian policy.

Senior U.S. and Arab officials say it was Gen. Soleimani's idea to harass and bleed American forces for years in Iraq by arming Shiite militias there. The general's elite Qods Force of soldiers and spies oversees Iran's support for groups fighting Israel, including Hezbollah and Hamas. Israel publicly blames the Qods Force for a string of assassination attempts on Israeli diplomats; U.S. officials have publicly blamed Iran and privately point a finger at the Qods Force. Last October, the U.S. Treasury Department placed sanctions on Gen. Soleimani for his alleged role in a bomb plot aimed at killing the Saudi Arabian ambassador at a cafe in Washington, D.C. Iran has denied the charges.

U.S. officials believe Mr. Soleimani's approval underlies any Qods Force operations outside Iran. They have tied Iran's Qods Force to recent bombings in Thailand and India, as well as alleged plotting in Azerbaijan. "He's a deep strategic thinker, but believes he should be a martyr" for Iran's Islamic revolution, said Mowwafak al-Rubaie, Iraq's former national security adviser, who has met Gen. Soleimani three times in Tehran in recent years.

Lightly bearded, 55 years old and often wearing a collarless business shirt or military uniform, Gen. Soleimani has a calm presence about him, according to people who have met him. American and British intelligence officials draw comparisons between the real-life Iranian general and the fictional Soviet spymaster Karla, of John le Carre's Cold War novels. Global chess masters both, their goal is to blunt U.S. advances while aligning with Washington's adversaries.

At times, Gen. Soleimani has communicated directly with American military planners. In early 2008, Gen. Soleimani passed a message to then-commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, Gen. David Petraeus, via Iraqi politician Ahmad Chalabi. "General Petraeus, you should know that I, Qasem Soleimani, control the policy for Iran with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza and Afghanistan," he said, according to an official familiar with the incident.

His leadership of the Qods Force, the international arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, gives him a unique portfolio of duties, U.S.

and Mideast officials say: intelligence operative, diplomat, foreign-policy strategist, battlefield commander and, allegedly, terrorism planner.

"I see [Gen. Soleimani] as sort of the evil genius behind all of the activities that Qods Force has done, all the expansion of Iranian influence," said Richard Clarke, counterterrorism czar for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Attempts to reach Gen. Soleimani through Iran's mission to the United Nations were unsuccessful. Tehran denies any role in supporting international terrorism or providing arms to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Iran accuses Israel of overseeing the assassinations of five Iranian nuclear scientists in recent years, a charge the Jewish state has neither denied nor confirmed.

Gen. Soleimani rose to his current job in the late 1990s after building his reputation during the Iran-Iraq war. Above, officials in Tehran attend a 2011 parade commemorating that conflict.

The Career of Major-General Qasem Soleimani

- 1957 Born in Iran's southeastern Kerman province.
- 1979 Joins the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps following the overthrow of Shah Reza Pahlavi. Leads division during eight-year Iran-Iraq war.
- 1997/1998 Appointed commander of the IRGC's overseas unit, the Qods Force, which is charged with exporting Iran's Islamic revolution.
- 2001 Supports cooperating with U.S. effort to overthrow Afghanistan's Taliban government following 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.
- 2004-2011 Oversees Qods Force efforts to arm and train Iraqi Shiite militias inside Iraq.
- 2011 Sanctioned by U.S. Treasury Department for his alleged role in a plot to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington.
- 2011-2012 Sanctioned by U.S. Treasury for alleged role in arming Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's security forces in their crackdown on political opponents.

Gen. Soleimani grew up in a poor family in Iran's southeast Kerman province, an area known for the central government's limited writ and for the power of its local tribes, according to researchers who have studied the commander's rise. As a young man he worked at menial construction jobs before joining the Revolutionary Guards, the armed-services branch responsible for enforcing the ideology behind Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

Within the Revolutionary Guards, he joined the Qods Force—the organization he now oversees. His background prepared him for his future operating in the tribal societies of Iraq and Afghanistan, said Ali Alfoneh, who studies Gen. Soleimani as a researcher at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

Gen. Soleimani spent his early years in the Qods Force combating Central Asian narcotics smugglers and the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Gen. Soleimani took over the Qods Force in the late 1990s after establishing a reputation for his fighting during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, according to Mr. Alfoneh and other academics.

In the months following the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the U.S., he emerged as a surprising U.S. ally, says Hossein Mousavian, a Princeton University-based researcher who served on Iran's Supreme National Security Council with Gen. Soleimani at that time. Gen. Soleimani was among those on the council who advocated cooperating with the U.S. to topple the Taliban. Iranian and American diplomats held regular meetings to devise ways to bring now-President Hamid Karzai to power, according to diplomats from both countries.

"Qasem is a very pragmatic commander," said Mr. Mousavian, who fell out with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad following the diplomat's role as an Iranian nuclear negotiator in the early 2000s. "He's willing to cooperate with the West if it serves Iran's interests."

Messrs. Mousavian, Al-Rubaie and others who have met the general describe him as both religious and pragmatic, but differ on his ultimate willingness to make peace with the U.S. Mr. Mousavian says the general wants the West to recognize Tehran's role as a Mideast power. Others see him as a revolutionary who will never accept rapprochement with the "Great Satan."

The fragile post-9/11 alliance between Iran and the U.S. collapsed with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. Both Washington and Tehran viewed Saddam Hussein as a threat but had very different views on who or what should succeed him.

Iran wanted the U.S. to quickly withdraw from Iraq and install a provisional government led by Shiites and Kurds with ties to Tehran. Instead, the Bush administration set up a formal occupation force and a military presence that stayed in Iraq for seven years.

The U.S.'s military occupation set the stage for what U.S. and Iraqi officials say was the Qods Force's aiding and arming of the militias in Iraq that harassed U.S. and allied forces there for much of the past decade. Beginning in 2004, American and Iraqi intelligence detected fighters traveling over Iraq's southeastern border into Iran for training with Qods Force and Hezbollah operatives. The Iraqis were schooled in small arms and roadside bombs, which became the biggest killer of American soldiers during the war.

The Iran-trained fighters also received religious schooling and were advised to follow the teachings of the founder of the modern Islamic state of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, according to fighters who were captured and interrogated by the U.S. military, Pentagon transcripts indicate. A number of the trainees told their American questioners that they had no love for the Qods Force or the Iranian system, but needed their assistance to fight the U.S. occupation.

As the battle against the militias wore on, U.S. officials voiced frustration that many of their allies within Iraq—including Iraq's president, Jalal Talabani—maintained their long-standing ties to Gen. Soleimani. Kurdish leaders such as Mr. Talabani cooperated with Iran during Saddam Hussein's rule in an effort to obtain independence from Baghdad.

"General Petraeus mentioned that we continue to see on average one rocket and one [armor-piercing bomb] attack daily," a State Department diplomat wrote from Baghdad in 2009, according to a cable obtained by the Internet site WikiLeaks. "The next time Talabani spoke to Qasem Soleimani, he might pass along that we are concerned about Iranian actions," the cable said.

In addition to Mr. Talabani, other close allies of the Bush administration also knew Gen. Soleimani, including Mr. Chalabi, the Iraqi Shiite

politician who shared a hatred of Saddam Hussein with the Iranians. In the weeks before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Mr. Chalabi traveled between Washington and Tehran and briefed Gen. Soleimani on U.S. objectives, according to Francis Brooke, an aide to the Iraqi politician.

At times, Gen. Soleimani's Iraqi and Lebanese allies engaged in direct conflict with U.S. forces inside Iraq, said American officials. In January 2007, four American soldiers were captured and executed in the central Iraqi city of Karbala in an operation the Pentagon believed was jointly run by the Qods Force, Hezbollah and Iraqi militants.

Later that year, the Pentagon captured two Iraqi brothers and a Hezbollah commander in southern Iraq who allegedly admitted to cooperating with Gen. Soleimani's Qods Force, after initially pretending to be a mute, according to military officials briefed on the operation.

With the end of the Iraq war—and the spread of Arab Spring popular uprisings across the region over the past year—the U.S.'s conflict with Gen. Soleimani and the Qods Force has expanded into new territory. The U.S. publicly alleges that Iran has been working to overthrow American allies in Yemen, Lebanon and Bahrain. Tehran has accused Washington of propping up Arab monarchs and despots in the Persian Gulf to protect U.S. energy and security interests.

The center of this conflict now is Syria, where Iran's closest Arab ally, President Assad, is facing a broad challenge to his family's 40-year rule. For the U.S., the goal of ending the Assad regime is primarily prompted by the opportunity to weaken Iran. Mr. Assad's fall, U.S. officials believe, would cripple Iran's ability to funnel arms to allies in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. The Obama administration hopes the Syrian uprising will rekindle an Iranian protest movement that was suppressed by Tehran's security forces in 2009.

The Qods Force has long had a presence in Damascus due to Iran's and Syria's joint efforts to arm Hezbollah and Hamas. Ever since the Arab Spring uprisings began last year, the Qods Force has been advising Syria's security forces on crowd control and on technologies needed to track political activists, according to U.S. officials and Syrian activists.

Since Gen. Soleimani's January visit to Damascus, U.S. and Arab officials said Tehran appears to have upped its support for the Syrian regime.

Mr. Assad's forces have been trying to crush Syria's opposition by overrunning its strongholds in the cities of Homs, Hama and Idlib. According to U.S. officials briefed on Syria intelligence, the Qods Force has been accelerating shipments of small arms and artillery to support that effort. Some of these arms have been ferried into Syria on Iranian Iluyshin jets controlled by the Qods Force, according to an American official briefed on the intelligence.

"Soleimani has emerged as public enemy No. 1 in the Arab Spring," said a senior administration official working on Syria.

The Obama administration, following the efforts of its predecessors, is trying to curtail the ability of Gen. Soleimani to project influence across the Middle East, senior U.S. officials said. The U.S. Treasury has placed sanctions on the Qods Force commander three times; those sanctions remain in place. The U.S. and European Union are also seeking to block the Revolutionary Guard's ability to ship or fly arms into Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

Last week, the Treasury sanctioned an Iranian airline, Yas Air, for allegedly ferrying arms to Damascus and specifically argued that the airline is controlled by the Qods Force. A spokesman for Yas Air said all its flights are in accordance with international aviation law.

Last October, a former Central Intelligence Agency spy, Reuel Marc Gerecht, testified before Congress that if the Qods Force's role in last year's alleged plot to kill the Saudi ambassador is proven, the U.S. "should hold Qasem Soleimani responsible.... Go get him, either try to capture him or kill him."

Iran's government responded by calling for the international policing body, Interpol, to arrest Mr. Gerecht. More than 200 Iranian lawmakers signed a statement of support for Gen. Soleimani. And on Farsi-language websites, hard-line Iranian groups launched a campaign behind the slogan: "We Are All Qasem Soleimani."

Article 4.

NYT

The Other Arab Spring

[Thomas L. Friedman](#)

April 7, 2012 -- ISN'T it interesting that the Arab awakening began in Tunisia with a fruit vendor who was harassed by police for not having a permit to sell food — just at the moment when world food prices hit record highs? And that it began in Syria with farmers in the southern village of Dara'a, who were demanding the right to buy and sell land near the border, without having to get permission from corrupt security officials? And that it was spurred on in Yemen — the first country in the world expected to run out of water — by a list of grievances against an incompetent government, among the biggest of which was that top officials were digging water wells in their own backyards at a time when the government was supposed to be preventing such water wildcatting? As Abdelsalam Razzaz, the minister of water in Yemen's new government, told Reuters last week: "The officials themselves have traditionally been the most aggressive well diggers. Nearly every minister had a well dug in his house."

All these tensions over land, water and food are telling us something: The Arab awakening was driven not only by political and economic stresses, but, less visibly, by environmental, population and climate stresses as well. If we focus only on the former and not the latter, we will never be able to help stabilize these societies.

Take Syria. "Syria's current social unrest is, in the most direct sense, a reaction to a brutal and out-of-touch regime," write Francesco Femia and Caitlin Werrell, in a report for their Center for Climate and Security in Washington. "However, that's not the whole story. The past few years have seen a number of significant social, economic, environmental and climatic changes in Syria that have eroded the social contract between citizen and government. ... If the international community and future policy makers in Syria are to address and resolve the drivers of unrest in the country, these changes will have to be better explored."

From 2006-11, they note, up to 60 percent of Syria's land experienced one of the worst droughts and most severe set of crop failures in its history. "According to a special case study from last year's Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, of the most vulnerable Syrians dependent on agriculture, particularly in the northeast governorate of Hassakeh (but also in the south), 'nearly 75 percent ... suffered total crop

failure.’ Herders in the northeast lost around 85 percent of their livestock, affecting 1.3 million people.” The United Nations reported that more than 800,000 Syrians had their livelihoods wiped out by these droughts, and many were forced to move to the cities to find work — adding to the burdens of already incompetent government.

“If climate projections stay on their current path, the drought situation in North Africa and the Middle East is going to get progressively worse, and you will end up witnessing cycle after cycle of instability that may be the impetus for future authoritarian responses,” argues Femia. “There are a few ways that the U.S. can be on the right side of history in the Arab world. One is to enthusiastically and robustly support democratic movements.” The other is to invest in climate-adaptive infrastructure and improvements in water management — to make these countries more resilient in an age of disruptive climate change.

An analysis by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, published last October in the *Journal of Climate*, and cited on Joe Romm’s blog, climateprogress.org, found that droughts in wintertime in the Middle East — when the region traditionally gets most of its rainfall to replenish aquifers — are increasing, and human-caused climate change is partly responsible.

“The magnitude and frequency of the drying that has occurred is too great to be explained by natural variability alone,” noted Martin Hoerling, of NOAA’s Earth System Research Laboratory, the lead author of the paper. “This is not encouraging news for a region that already experiences water stress, because it implies natural variability alone is unlikely to return the region’s climate to normal.”

Especially when you consider the other stresses. Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed, the executive director of the Institute for Policy Research and Development in London, writing in *The Beirut Daily Star* in February, pointed out that 12 of the world’s 15 most water-scarce countries — Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Israel and Palestine — are in the Middle East, and after three decades of explosive population growth these countries are “set to dramatically worsen their predicament. Although birth rates are falling, one-third of the overall population is below 15 years old, and large numbers of young women are reaching reproductive

age, or soon will be.” A British Defense Ministry study, he added, “has projected that by 2030 the population of the Middle East will increase by 132 percent — generating an unprecedented ‘youth bulge.’”

And a lot more mouths to feed with less water than ever. As Lester Brown, the president of the Earth Policy Institute and author of “World on the Edge,” notes, 20 years ago, using oil-drilling technology, the Saudis tapped into an aquifer far below the desert to produce irrigated wheat, making themselves self-sufficient. But now almost all that water is gone, and Saudi wheat production is, too. So the Saudis are investing in farm land in Ethiopia and Sudan, but that means they will draw more Nile water for irrigation away from Egypt, whose agriculture-rich Nile Delta is already vulnerable to any sea level rise and saltwater intrusion.

If you ask “what are the real threats to our security today,” said Brown, “at the top of the list would be climate change, population growth, water shortages, rising food prices and the number of failing states in the world. As that list grows, how many failed states before we have a failing global civilization, and everything begins to unravel?”

Hopefully, we won’t go there. But, then, we should all remember that quote attributed to Leon Trotsky: “You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.” Well, you may not be interested in climate change, but climate change is interested in you.

Folks, this is not a hoax. We and the Arabs need to figure out — and fast — more ways to partner to mitigate the environmental threats where we can and to build greater resiliency against those where we can’t. Twenty years from now, this could be all that we’re talking about.

Article 5.

Al- Masry al-Youm

Qatar and Saudi Arabia at odds over

Shater’s nomination

[Sultan al-Qassemi](#)

Ap. 7th -- The Muslim Brotherhood's surprise announcement nominating Khairat al-Shater for the presidency has ruffled feathers not only in Egypt but also here in the Gulf. The two Gulf States that perhaps are most at odds with each other over this nomination are Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The small state of Qatar has not enjoyed good relations with the ousted Mubarak regime, in fact in a strange twist of irony Hosni Mubarak's [first official](#) visit to Doha came only towards the end of 2010, only weeks before his downfall was championed by the Qatar state broadcaster Al Jazeera. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, enjoyed very warm relations with "al-Reyyes," as Mubarak was referred to in the Gulf. During the 18-day Egyptian uprising, the Saudi King himself offered to [make up](#) for any funding that the US may withhold from its close ally.

The stakes between Egypt and these nations are high. Qatar and Saudi have promised the largest amounts of pledges to the Egyptian government; the first promised a staggering amount of [US\\$10 billion](#) in projects and financial aid while the latter promised up to [\\$4 billion](#). Both [states](#) have [transferred](#) \$500 million to Egypt's coffers so far. At [130,000](#), the number of Egyptians living in Qatar pales in comparison with the [1.2 million](#) Egyptians in the Kingdom, although Egyptian expatriates have assumed more [prominent roles](#) in Qatari society as advisors to the Emir and heads of institutions. Saudi investments in Egypt stood at \$10 billion in 2011, with two-way trade exceeding \$3.5 [billion annually](#), whereas Qatari investment in Egypt stood at [\\$430 million](#), with Qatari-Egyptian two-way trade having [almost doubled](#) in one year to \$500 million in 2011. Unlike other Gulf States, Qatar early on identified the changing dynamics within the Egyptian media landscape, launching Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr (Egypt Live), a TV channel targeted specifically to the Egyptian market [only ten days](#) after Mubarak was ousted. Qatar's Emir was also the only Gulf leader to [visit](#) Egypt and meet with Field Marshal Tantawi in his new capacity back in May 2011.

Until Shater's nomination, the Gulf States of Saudi and Qatar were in agreement on maintaining ties with Egypt; today, however, divergent views may come into the forefront. At the outset, the prospect of Shater's presidency will add more worries to Saudi Arabia, who in mid-February 2011, just a few days after the ouster of its ally Mubarak, issued a

[resolution](#) to withdraw sections from public schools textbooks that it claimed “incite violence” and specifically named those segments dealing with the leaders of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood including Sheikh Hassan al-Banna, the group’s founder, and Sayyed Qotb, according to the London based Al-Hayat.

Although Saudi Arabia has not issued any official statement following the rise of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, columnists close to the Saudi regime have repeatedly [spelled out](#) the suspicion of Saudi decision makers regarding the group. Crown Prince Nayef, who has served as Saudi Interior Minister since 1975, is especially known for his distrust of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Back in 2002, Prince Nayef made the audacious [statement saying](#), “Without any hesitation I say it, that our problems, all of them, came from the direction of the Muslim Brotherhood.” Then, following Mubarak’s downfall, Prince Nayef denounced a journalist as a “[terrorist sympathizer](#)” when he asked him whether his country would improve relations with the Muslim Brotherhood. According to the New York Times, Prince Nayef said his country felt “betrayed” by the Muslim Brotherhood after the Kingdom offered refuge to its members who were persecuted under Gamal Abdel Nasser “only to have them establish a competing political ideology.” Ironically, [reports indicated](#) that out of the 120,000 votes cast last winter by Egyptians living in Saudi Arabia in the previous parliamentary elections, a majority went to the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party.

Furthermore, Omar Suleiman, Egypt’s former head of intelligence, who is known for his [distrust](#) of the Muslim Brotherhood, paid a [visit](#) to Saudi Arabia following Mubarak’s downfall and was shown [publically on Saudi TV](#) meeting with his long time Saudi intelligence colleague, the now powerful Crown Prince Nayef.

Qatar’s relations with the Muslim Brotherhood are poles apart from that of its giant neighbor. In early March, Shater paid an [official visit](#) to Qatar, a Gulf state that has been welcoming Muslim Brotherhood members for over half a century including the influential Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the late Abdul Muiz [Abdel Sattar](#) and Dr. Ahmad [al-Assal](#). On his visit which lasted several days Shater “discussed coordination between the

Brotherhood, the Freedom and Justice Party and Qatar in the [upcoming period](#).”

The candidacy of Abdel Moneim Abouel Fotouh, who was expelled from the Brotherhood and is experiencing a surge in popularity, may complicate matters within the decision-making circles of Doha. Prior to Shater’s nomination, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who enjoys strong relations with the Emir of Qatar, singled out Abouel Fotouh as his candidate of choice. Qaradawi had referred to Abouel Fotouh as “a cheerful man of good morals [who deals with everyone](#)” in comments last February; adding that he sees him “as the best candidate in terms of age and experience on Arab and Egyptian affairs.”

Qatar has recently been enjoying a [rapprochement](#) with Saudi Arabia that may witness a setback if the former was seen to promote Shater’s candidacy too enthusiastically. So far, Shater has appeared numerous times on Qatari-owned Al Jazeera Arabic in [October and February](#), as well as the English version of the channel and both Al Jazeera Mubasher and Al Jazeera Mubasher Misr channels.

There is no denying the keen interest that these two wealthy and influential Gulf States will be paying to the Egyptian presidential elections. To Saudi Arabia, the notion of an influential Arabic Islamic leaning republic offering competing ideologies to its own Wahhabi teachings could pose a threat to its dominant role in the Sunni Muslim world. To Qatar, a relationship that it has carefully cultivated over decades may finally be bearing fruit, turning a once cold relationship with Egypt into a strategic and valuable partnership.

After a period of relatively close coordination following the Arab uprisings, the Gulf States of Qatar and Saudi Arabia will likely witness their first major foreign policy divergence should the prospect of a Muslim Brotherhood president in Egypt turn into a reality.

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Why Humans, Like Ants, Need a Tribe

E. O. Wilson

April 2, 2012 -- Have you ever wondered why, in the ongoing [presidential campaign](#), we so strongly hear the pipes calling us to arms? Why the religious among us bristle at any challenge to the creation story they believe? Or even why team sports evoke such intense loyalty, joy, and despair?

The answer is that everyone, no exception, must have a tribe, an alliance with which to jockey for power and territory, to demonize the enemy, to organize rallies and raise flags.

And so it has ever been. In ancient history and prehistory, tribes gave visceral comfort and pride from familiar fellowship, and a way to defend the group enthusiastically against rival groups. It gave people a name in addition to their own and social meaning in a chaotic world. It made the environment less disorienting and dangerous. Human nature has not changed. Modern groups are psychologically equivalent to the tribes of ancient history. As such, these groups are directly descended from the bands of primitive humans and prehumans.

The drive to join is deeply ingrained, a result of a complicated evolution that has led our species to a condition that biologists call eusociality.

“Eu-,” of course, is a prefix meaning pleasant or good: euphony is something that sounds wonderful; eugenics is the attempt to improve the gene pool. And the eusocial group contains multiple generations whose members perform altruistic acts, sometimes against their own personal interests, to benefit their group. Eusociality is an outgrowth of a new way of understanding evolution, which blends traditionally popular individual selection (based on individuals competing against each other) with group selection (based on competition among groups). Individual selection tends to favor selfish behavior. Group selection favors altruistic behavior and is responsible for the origin of the most advanced level of social behavior, that attained by ants, bees, termites—and humans.

Among eusocial insects, the impulse to support the group at the expense of the individual is largely instinctual. But to play the game the human

way required a complicated mix of closely calibrated altruism, cooperation, competition, domination, reciprocity, defection, and deceit. Humans had to feel empathy for others, to measure the emotions of friend and enemy alike, to judge the intentions of all of them, and to plan a strategy for personal social interactions.

As a result, the human brain became simultaneously highly intelligent and intensely social. It had to build mental scenarios of personal relationships rapidly, both short term and long term. Its memories had to travel far into the past to summon old scenarios and far into the future to imagine the consequences of every relationship. Ruling on the alternative plans of action were the amygdala and other emotion-controlling centers of the brain and autonomic nervous system. Thus was born the human condition, selfish at one time, selfless at another, and the two impulses often conflicted.

Today, the social world of each modern human is not a single tribe but rather a system of interlocking tribes, among which it is often difficult to find a single compass. People savor the company of like-minded friends, and they yearn to be in one of the best—a combat Marine regiment, perhaps, an elite college, the executive committee of a company, a religious sect, a fraternity, a garden club—any collectivity that can be compared favorably with other, competing groups of the same category. Their thirst for group membership and superiority of their group can be satisfied even with symbolic victory by their warriors in clashes on ritualized battlefields: that is, in sports. Like the cheerful and well-dressed citizens of [Washington, D.C.](#), who came out to witness the First Battle of Bull Run during the Civil War, they anticipate the experience with relish. The fans are lifted by seeing the uniforms, symbols, and battle gear of the team, the championship cups and banners on display, the dancing seminude maidens appropriately called cheerleaders. When the Boston Celtics defeated the [Los Angeles](#) Lakers for the National Basketball Association championship on a June night in 1984, the mantra was “Celts Supreme!” The social psychologist Roger Brown, who witnessed the aftermath, commented, “The fans burst out of the Garden and nearby bars, practically break dancing in the air, stogies lit, arms uplifted, voices screaming. The hood of a car was flattened, about thirty people jubilantly piled aboard, and the driver—a fan—smiled happily ...It did not seem to

me that those fans were just sympathizing or empathizing with their team. They personally were flying high. On that night each fan's self-esteem felt supreme; a social identity did a lot for many personal identities."

Experiments conducted over many years by social psychologists have revealed how swiftly and decisively people divide into groups and then discriminate in favor of the one to which they belong. Even when the experimenters created the groups arbitrarily, prejudice quickly established itself. Whether groups played for pennies or were divided by their preference for some abstract painter over another, the participants always ranked the out-group below the in-group. They judged their "opponents" to be less likable, less fair, less trustworthy, less competent. The prejudices asserted themselves even when the subjects were told the in-groups and out-groups had been chosen arbitrarily.

The tendency to form groups, and then to favor in-group members, has the earmarks of instinct. That may not be intuitive: some could argue that in-group bias is conditioned, not instinctual, that we affiliate with family members and play with neighboring children because we're taught to. But the ease with which we fall into those affiliations points to the likelihood that we are already inclined that way—what psychologists call "prepared learning," the inborn propensity to learn something swiftly and decisively. And indeed, cognitive psychologists have found that newborn infants are most sensitive to the first sounds they hear, to their mother's face, and to the sounds of their native language. Later they look preferentially at persons who previously spoke their native language within their hearing. Similarly, preschool children tend to select native-language speakers as friends.

The elementary drive to form and take deep pleasure from in-group membership easily translates at a higher level into tribalism. People are prone to ethnocentrism. It is an uncomfortable fact that even when given a guilt-free choice, individuals prefer the company of others of the same race, nation, clan, and religion. They trust them more, relax with them better in business and social events, and prefer them more often than not as marriage partners. They are quicker to anger at evidence that an out-group is behaving unfairly or receiving undeserved rewards. And they grow hostile to any out-group encroaching upon the territory or resources of their in-group.

When in experiments black and white Americans were flashed pictures of the other race, their amygdalas, the brain's center of fear and anger, were activated so quickly and subtly that the centers of the brain were unaware of the response. The subject, in effect, could not help himself. When, on the other hand, appropriate contexts were added—say, the approaching African-American was a doctor and the white his patient—two other sites of the brain integrated with the higher learning centers, the cingulate cortex and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, lit up, silencing input through the amygdala. Thus different parts of the brain have evolved by group selection to create groupishness, as well as to mediate this hardwired propensity.

When the amygdala rules the action, however, there is little or no guilt in the pleasure experienced from watching violent sporting events and war films in which the story unwinds to a satisfying destruction of the enemy. The horrors make the fascination. War is the strong life; it is life in extremis.

Literature and history are strewn with accounts of what happens at the extreme, as in the following from Judges 12: 5–6 in the Old Testament: the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan leading to Ephraim, and whenever a survivor of Ephraim said, “Let me go over,” the men of Gilead asked him, “Are you an Ephraimite?” If he replied, “No,” they said, “All right, say ‘Shibboleth.’?” If he said “Sibboleth,” because he could not pronounce the word correctly, they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed at that time.

Research has shown that tribal aggressiveness goes well back beyond Neolithic times. And there is a good chance that it could be a much older heritage, dating beyond the split 6 million years ago between the lines leading to modern chimpanzees and to humans, respectively.

The patterns of collective violence in which young chimp males engage are remarkably similar to those of young human males. Aside from constantly vying for status, both for themselves and for their gangs, they tend to avoid open mass confrontations with rival troops, instead relying on surprise attacks. The purpose of raids made by the male gangs on neighboring communities is evidently to kill or drive out its members and acquire new territory. The entirety of such conquest under fully natural

conditions has been witnessed by John Mitani and his collaborators in Uganda's Kibale National Park. The chimp war, conducted over 10 years, was eerily humanlike. Every 10 to 14 days, patrols of up to 20 males penetrated enemy territory, moving quietly in single file, scanning the terrain from ground to the treetops, and halting cautiously at every surrounding noise. If they encountered a force larger than their own, the invaders broke rank and ran back to their own territory. When they encountered a lone male, however, they pummeled and bit him to death. When a female was encountered, they usually let her go. (This latter tolerance was not a display of gallantry. If she carried an infant, they took it from her and killed and ate it.) Finally, after such constant pressure for so long, the invading gangs simply annexed the enemy territory, adding 22 percent to the land owned by their own community.

Our bloody nature, it can now be argued in the context of modern biology, is ingrained because group-versus-group was a principal driving force that made us what we are. In prehistory, group selection lifted the hominids to heights of solidarity, to genius, to enterprise. And to fear. Each tribe knew with justification that if it was not armed and ready, its very existence was imperiled. Throughout history, the escalation of a large part of technology has had combat as its central purpose. Today, public support is best fired up by appeal to the emotions of deadly combat, over which the amygdala is grandmaster. We find ourselves in the battle to stem an oil spill, the fight to tame inflation, the war against cancer. Wherever there is an enemy, animate or inanimate, there must be a victory.

Any excuse for a real war will do, so long as it is seen as necessary to protect the tribe. The remembrance of past horrors has no effect. It should not be thought that war, often accompanied by genocide, is a cultural artifact of a few societies. Nor has it been an aberration of history, a result of the growing pains of our species' maturation. Wars and genocide have been universal and eternal, respecting no particular time or culture.

Overall, big wars have been replaced around the world by small wars of the kind and magnitude more typical of hunter-gatherer and primitively agricultural societies. Civilized societies have tried to eliminate torture, execution, and the murder of civilians, but those fighting little wars do not comply.

Civilization appears to be the ultimate redeeming product of competition between groups. Because of it, we struggle on behalf of good and against evil, and reward generosity, compassion, and altruism while punishing or downplaying selfishness. But if group conflict created the best in us, it also created the deadliest. As humans, this is our greatest, and worst, genetic inheritance.