

Silent Surge: Over 18,000 American Troops Deployed In Middle East

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Approximately 4,750 American troops are slated to deploy this week to Kuwait, a traditional U.S. staging ground for conflict in the Middle East. They will join the 14,000 American troops already deployed to U.S. Central Command on a mission to confront Iran's malign behavior in the region, Pentagon officials confirmed.

The U.S. escalation of troop forces came Tuesday evening, two days before the U.S. airstrike in Iraq that killed General Qasem Soleimani, leader of the Quds Force division of Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

“At the direction of the Commander in Chief, I have authorized the deployment of an infantry battalion from the Immediate Response Force (IRF) of the 82nd Airborne Division to the U.S. Central Command area of operations in response to recent events in Iraq,” said Secretary of Defense Mark Esper in a written statement Tuesday evening. “Approximately 750 soldiers will deploy to the region immediately, and additional forces from the IRF are prepared to deploy over the next several days.”

The deployment of thousands of U.S. troops to the volatile region and Trump's decision to order the killing of Iranian General Qasim Soleimani has increased fears that a hot war will break out. Global stock market futures fell, and oil prices spiked on the news.

Analysts disagree on the effect the airstrikes and U.S. deployments will have, however.

“Let's be clear, while the United States and Iran have been locked in a cycle of confrontation for four decades, neither side has been prepared to engage in full-scale and direct conflict with the other. And yet that is a step that may very well follow from these actions — if cooler heads don't quickly prevail,” said Chris Preble, vice president for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute.

Jim Antle, editor in chief of *The American Conservative*, writes that “such a war isn't inevitable.”

Killing Soleimani may have the desired effect of crippling future Iranian attacks. But, “our continued, if reduced, occupation of Iraq is the main thing exposing Americans to risk of harm at Iranian hands. It remains to be seen how much that calculus now changes.”

The quiet buildup of thousands of American troops and military assets in the region significantly increases the number of targets for Iran to choose from, should it choose to counter-strike.