



## **Empire Update: Did Trump Order Iran Assassination?**

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

**Abby Martin (AM):** This is Abby Martin with your Empire Update, wrapping up the last week of US imperialism, our first story is about a brazen terrorist attack that murdered a civilian. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, one of the most important nuclear scientists in Iran was assassinated on November twenty seven by unknown gunmen. Here's what we know so far. First, only two countries are likely culprits who have also done so in the past, the United States and Israel from twenty ten to twenty twelve. Back during the Obama administration, four nuclear scientists were killed in Iran. Though Israel never took credit for the executions, reports were conclusive that Israel, working with the MEK, were behind the attacks. The MEK is a secretive cult of Iranian exiles headquartered in Paris that is known for carrying out terrorist attacks in Iran. They were even listed as a terrorist organization by the US, while at the same time US politicians were cashing in lavish paychecks from them to do their bidding. Central figures like John Bolton and former DNC chairman Howard Dean were given tens of thousands of dollars from this group. I even confronted Dean about this on my old show, Breaking the Set. Interestingly enough, you've been one of the most vocal politicians advocating the Mujahedin-e-Khalq. The MEK, a terrorist group in Iran, recently was on the State Department's terror watch list. Why do you support this group? It's not a terrorist group, first of all. Aren't they responsible for car bombings in Iran?

**Howard Dean:** 30 years ago, they were responsible for some terrorist acts.

**AM:** Israel rarely acts unilaterally. We know that they would likely not have done this back then or now without collaborating with the US. Likewise, if this was a US plot, they would most likely collaborate with Israeli intelligence. So either way, the US was probably involved. We also know Fakhrizadeh was specifically on the radar to be targeted by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who threatened him by name in a televised speech back in April 2018. Or could this just have been Trump? We know that last week Trump asked his generals to provide him with a variety of military strikes on Iran, making clear he wanted to leave office with some kind of attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Was this some kind of compromise in response to Trump's desire to potentially start a war? Was he offered a low risk option to carry out his second high level assassination, pleasing the anti Iran hawks in the US and Israel, but with no risk of repercussions? Look, we'll probably never know what really happened, but it's very safe to assume that Washington had a hand in the attack. Either way, if Biden doesn't immediately condemn this, it's going to be much harder for him to

engage in the diplomacy with Iran he says he wants, and understandably so, whether it was the US or Israel or both. We need to see this for what it is an act of state terrorism funded by our tax dollars. Even if this wasn't an act of war with Iran, assassinating a noncombatant for being a scientist would still be considered a war crime under international law. And imagine the response if Iranians assassinated a nuclear scientist here in the US. Not only that, imagine the response from corporate media, the hand-wringing, the condemnation from every pundit, from every politician. It would be condemned by the entire media and political establishment as the worst kind of terrorism, and they would be out for blood because of it. But what happens to Iran? There doesn't seem to be any concern. This act of aggression against Iran's non-existent nuclear weapons program is particularly maddening, considering Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons, and the US empire, with the most nukes in the world, is the only country to have used them.

Our next update is a new development in a story I reported last week regarding Trump's misreported troop withdrawal or, more accurately, troop repositioning for the US war in Somalia. On November twenty fifth, a senior State Department official leaked to the press that a CIA operative had just been killed in combat in Somalia. Now, some have speculated that this leak was to put pressure on the Trump administration to back off its plan to move troops from Somalia to Kenya and Djibouti, from which they will still conduct combat operations in Somalia. But as I reported last week, the US would still leave intact its CIA operations in Somalia like this operative killed last weekend. But the real story here is that it exposes a little known aspect of the CIA. When most Americans hear CIA, they think of people in suits sitting behind a desk or conducting spying operations. They don't often think of troops in combat, it's unknown to most that the CIA has something called the Special Activities Division, which is essentially its own paramilitary organization, it recruits the most elite fighters from Army Delta Force and SEAL Team Six. It's considered the most mysterious military organization in the world. And they're on the ground probably everywhere. They do everything from conducting high level assassinations and kidnappings to secretly training proxy forces, similar to the US military special ops, but somehow far more dark, more secretive and totally unaccountable. For example, if CIA troops are on the ground shooting people, the US can totally deny it, pretending it actually doesn't have soldiers there, meaning the US really has troops on the ground very much at war in far more countries than they'll admit. How many countries have these CIA strike teams on the ground where it would be far too scandalous or provocative to send troops? But back to Somalia. The phrase removing troops will only refer to official troops, not these unofficial hit squads who are very much US troops. While it's yet to be seen what will happen regarding the Somalia withdrawal, we got a little reminder this week that the expanse of the US war machine is even greater than we already know.

In our final update, we finally have some good news. The domination of the US empire in Latin America was dealt a major blow this week when Bolivia's new president, Louise Arce, announced that his country was rejoining three key regional alliances, the Bolivarian Alliance

for the Peoples of Our America, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Union of South American Nations. ALBA was founded by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez as a vehicle to unite progressive and pro socialist governments in the region in order to fight for Latin America's independence from US imperialism. Washington has sought to destroy the Alba Alliance since it was founded to keep Latin America subservient to US capitalism. In fact, the Pentagon has launched coups against several ALBA nations, a successful one in Honduras, several failed ones in Venezuela and Nicaragua and most recently, Bolivia, where the Trump administration helped overthrow left wing indigenous leader Evo Morales. The recent victory against the US coup government in the Bolivian election last month was the first blow to US designs, and this new announcement has landed a second punch. Rejoining ALBA is not just important for Bolivia, but for other ALBA nations who will have another link in the chain of solidarity against the US empire. And for now, we can revel in that celebration by the Bolivian grassroots and in the failure of the Pentagon.

**END**