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Iranian General In Charge of Defense of Baghdad as al-Qaeda Nears

By Jason Ditz

June 13, 2014

With an al-Qaeda seizing towns in Nineveh with ease, a siege of Baghdad is seemingly only a matter of time, and could amount to the last stand for Iraq's Maliki government in trying to retain a meaningful amount of the fractured country.



Iran, a close ally of Maliki with a major interest in stalling al-Qaeda's advance, is the first sending troops to the country, with estimates of about 500 special forces from Iran's Quds Force on the ground already

Iran seems mostly centering its efforts on the immediate threat to Baghdad, and Iranian Gen. Qassem Suleimani, the head of the Quds Force, is said to be in Baghdad, leading the defense of the city personally.

Gen. Suleimani is currently under sanctions by the US as a "terrorist" for his role in aiding the Assad government of Syria against al-Qaeda, and ironically his relative success against the militants now puts him in a key position of defending US interests in keeping the Maliki government intact.

And while it seems like a long shot, Iranian officials are also saying they're open to coordinating their aid with the US, who is expected to be providing weapons and air support for the feckless Iraqi Army in an attempt to stem al-Qaeda's advance.