

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran has sternly warned British Ambassador to Tehran Robert Macaire for attending an "illegal" gathering and advised him to avoid such a behavior, a senior Iranian diplomat said Monday.

"We summoned the ambassador and he was reprimanded severely," Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said. He said the Iranian Foreign Ministry later issued a statement warning that in case of repetition of such a behavior, the ministry will adopt measures tougher than just summoning the ambassador.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif will not attend the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos this week because its organizers had "abruptly changed its agenda", its foreign ministry spokesman said on Monday.

"He was scheduled to attend ... but they abruptly changed the schedule and it was not the schedule that we agreed upon. So he will not attend Davos," Abbas Mousavi said.

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## New York Times: Iran's Position Stronger Now

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The Trump administration is seeking to keep pressure on Iran without pushing the region into a volatile new confrontation, the Wall Street Journal reported Monday, quoting U.S. and regional officials.

U.S. officials said they are increasingly confident Iran and its Mideast allies are looking to avoid a head-on fight with America, the newspaper said.

Senior U.S. officials are urging Trump to keep imposing economic sanctions and wait to see if European leaders move to reimpose United Nations sanctions on Iran, it added.

Some of those who backed the decision to assassinate Gen. Qassem Soleimani on Jan. 3 argue that continuing to squeeze Iran could weaken the government, officials involved in the discussions reportedly said.

Trump administration officials say they aren't seeking regime change, just a dramatic shift in Tehran's approach to military and foreign affairs.

"The combination of maximum economic pressure and restoring deterrence by credible threat of military force, if attacked, is going to do more to advance peace and stability in the region than a policy of accommodation with the regime," said Brian Hook, who oversees Trump administration policy toward Iran at the State Department.

Other administration officials, including some who harbored misgivings about the assassination of Gen. Soleimani, believe that direct, back-channel talks between Tehran and Washington would be a more effective way to avert open conflict, the paper said, noting that those officials appeared to be in the minority.

"It seems that everyone is standing down," a senior U.S. administration official told the Journal. "The question now is what can we do to advance the president's agenda?"

According to the paper, U.S. allies in the Middle East are recalibrating policies, with the occupying regime of Israel urging continued U.S. military pressure against Iran's allies in the region and Arab states in the Persian Gulf urging the U.S. to de-escalate the military confrontation with Iran.

Twice this month, U.S. officials said, Trump has talked by phone with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the emir of Qatar with close ties to Tehran. Sheikh Tamim offered to serve as a mediator between Washington and Tehran in hopes of

averting a dangerous conflict, current and former U.S. officials briefed on the calls said.

But many Trump administration officials are skeptical that Qatar's mediation efforts would be more successful than those of France, Japan, Oman or Pakistan, all of which failed to secure a diplomatic breakthrough, the paper said.

Saudi Arabia also sent its vice defense minister, Prince Khaled bin Salman, to Washington, where he urged Trump to look for ways to avoid a regional war, the Journal reported.

Saudi officials were reportedly concerned that Houthi fighters in Yemen might step up their attacks on the neighboring kingdom, which has reduced cross-border attacks and laid the groundwork for a potential peace deal.

Those fears were realized over the weekend when Houthi forces launched a missile strike that killed more than 110 Saudi mercenaries.

While Qatar and other Arab nations are trying to defuse tensions, the occupying regime of Israel appears to be resuming its airstrikes in Syria.

According to the Journal, much of the U.S. focus following the assassination in Baghdad has been on containing the damage in Iraq, where lawmakers pushed through a measure calling for America to withdraw all its troops.

Meanwhile, the New York Times castigated the "wrong track for confronting Iran". It reminded that after the assassination, Iran would not be satisfied until America leaves the Middle East.

The paper said while Trump chose to look to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf emirates to sustain the old order in order to counter Iran, "those monarchies need ties to the larger Arab states, which are now in disarray".

According to the Times, Iran's signing of a nuclear deal and recent protests in the country "may have convinced Washington that the Islamic Republic is teetering, and that more pressure could topple it".

"But the Iranian state is not as weak as Washington estimates," the paper said.

The U.S. assassination of General Soleimani has only strengthened the Islamic Republic and the enormous crowds that gathered to mourn the general give it a mandate and confidence in the country's ability to take on the United States, it added.

(Continued on Page 7)

Ayatollah Khamenei:

# Iran's Resistance Charisma Angers Americans



Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei meets a group of Hajj officials in Tehran Monday, Jan. 20, 2020.

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Monday U.S. leaders want Iran to abandon its "new message for the world" when they say the Islamic Republic should behave like a normal nation.

Ayatollah Khamenei told a group of Hajj officials here that the Iranian nation's independence, resistance and refusal to submit to bullying angers the United States.

"The resistance of the Islamic Republic of Iran against America and the Iranian nation's refusal to un-

dergo bullying is a fascinating fact for the world and this fascination should be used to spread the truth about Islam and the Iranian nation," he said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said the model of "religious democracy" being practiced in Iran is unknown to the world, adding the Hajj is an opportunity to promote it and explain the reasons behind the U.S. enmity with Iran, while "millions of propaganda instruments are operating against the Islamic Republic".

"The reason Americans are angry

with the Iranian nation is the appeal which arises from the image of resistance in an independent system standing up against a highway bully," the Leader said.

Tensions between Iran and the United States have risen to new highs following the United States' assassination of top Iranian military General Qassem Soleimani in Iraq and the Islamic Republic's response to the terrorist move with a volley of ballistic missiles pounding two US bases.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pom-

peo released a video after the attack, in which he said Washington wanted "Iran to simply behave like a normal nation."

Ayatollah Khamenei said the "aim of the Americans in saying that Iran should behave like a normal nation is that the Islamic Republic drop its new message for the world, that is combining popular opinion with Islamic thought and religious principles in the formation and administration of society."

"Introducing the political foundations of the Islamic Republic's system and explaining its new message to the world is another important and necessary task in the Hajj," the Leader added.

Ayatollah Khamenei described the Hajj as a political, ideological and social movement, saying many countries are unaware of its significance and function.

The late father of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini "taught us that the Hajj is a serious and international mobilization point, and bears many benefits for the Islamic Ummah," the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei also touched on immense efforts made by the global powers to prevent the formation of a united Islamic society.

"The Islamic Ummah has not yet formed in its true sense, namely a cohesive unit that acts with common will and purpose and unfortunately - against the invitation to Islamic unity by well-wishers and sympathizers - slanders, conflicts and wars are common in the Islamic countries."

## New Quds Force Chief Vows 'Manly' Revenge

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The newly-appointed commander of Iran's Quds Force said the United States assassinated his predecessor General Qassem Soleimani "in a cowardly way" and promised to "hit his enemy in a manly fashion".

General Esmail Qaani made the remarks in a ceremony held here to induct him as the new commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)'s Quds Force.

The Americans hit Gen. Soleimani "in a cowardly way, but with God's grace and through endeavors of freedom-seekers around the world who want vengeance over his blood, we will hit his enemy in a manly fashion," he said.

Gen. Soleimani's assassination in a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad on January 3 prompted Iran to pound two American bases in Iraq with a volley of ballistic missiles.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali

Khamenei, while announcing Gen. Qaani's appointment, said the new Quds Force chief was "among the most prominent IRGC commanders" during the 1980-1988 Iraqi imposed war on Iran, adding the unit under the veteran soldier will follow an "identical" strategy pursued by Gen. Soleimani.

At Gen. Soleimani's funeral days later, Gen. Qaani pledged to continue on his predecessor's path "with the same force", saying his assassination "will be reciprocated in several steps by removing the U.S. from the region".

Born in the late 1950s in the city of Mashhad in northeast Iran, Gen. Qaani joined the IRGC in 1980, a few months before Iraqi forces invaded western Iran.

Soon after the war, Gen. Qaani was appointed as deputy chief of the IRGC's ground forces.

"Our enemies only understand the language of force and this

(Continued on Page 7)

## FM Zarif: Iran to Quit NPT If Referred to UN

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran said on Monday it could quit the global nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if European countries refer it to the UN Security Council over a nuclear agreement.

The 1968 NPT has been the foundation of global nuclear arms control since the Cold War, including a 2015 deal Iran signed with world powers that offered it access to global trade in return for accepting curbs to its nuclear energy program.

The fate of the 2015 pact has been in doubt since U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of it and reimposed sanctions. Iran has responded by scaling back its commitments, although it says it wants the pact to survive.

Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said on Monday Iran's steps in reducing commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal are over.

"The steps of reducing commitments are finished but if the Europeans continue their improper behavior or send Iran's file to the

Security Council, we will withdraw from the NPT," Zarif said.

Britain, France and Germany declared Iran in violation of the 2015 pact last week and have launched a dispute mechanism that could eventually see the matter referred back to the Security Council and the reimposition of UN sanctions.

Zarif also said Iran could take other steps before withdrawing from the NPT, although he did not specify them.

The 190-member NPT bans signatories other than the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France from acquiring nuclear weapons, in return for allowing them to pursue peaceful nuclear programs for power generation, overseen by the United Nations.

The only country ever to declare its withdrawal from the NPT was North Korea, which expelled nuclear inspectors and openly tested atomic weapons. Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan never signed up, nor did the occupying regime of Israel,

(Continued on Page 7)