

QESHM (Dispatches) – A magnitude 5.8 earthquake hit in the vicinity of Iran's Qeshm island in the Persian Gulf on Sunday. The tremor took place near the village of Laft in the central district of Qeshm County, in Hormozgan Province, at a shallow depth of 13 kilometers at 16:00 local time (19:30 GMT). The quake was short, lasting a mere eight seconds, but was felt in different parts of Hormozgan. There was no immediate information about human or material damage. Iran experiences frequent seismic activity as it sits where two major tectonic plates meet.

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – A deputy commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) says the real revenge against the U.S. government for the assassination of revered commander Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani is expelling the American troops from the Middle East. Speaking at a memorial service for Gen. Soleimani in the southern city of Bandar Abbas on Sunday, Brigadier General Gholam Hossein Gheibparvar said the U.S. government made "a strategic mistake" by assassinating Lt. Gen. Soleimani. "The U.S. should not assume that it has hit and can run," he said, adding, "The revenge for Hajj Qassem Soleimani is not just a few missiles."

Viewpoint

Saudis Continue Spree of War Crimes in Yemen

Big Success Feature Awarded at Asia Pacific Festival



Iranian Women Karateka Bag Two Bronze Medals in Dubai



U.S. Rejects Iraq's Demand, Offers Partial Pullout



Rouhani: Iran Will Never Yield to U.S. Pressure for Talks

TEHRAN (Press TV) – Iran's President Hassan Rouhani says the country will never give in to negotiations from a position of weakness, emphasizing that the U.S. policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran has failed to achieve its goals.

Rouhani made the remarks in a press conference with domestic and international media in Tehran on Sunday, saying, "All [economic] indexes show that we have weathered [the worst phase of] the U.S. maximum pressure [policy]. Americans have reached the conclusion that the path they have chosen [for dealing with Iran] has been based on a wrong strategy."

He added, "What they thought that they could use maximum pressure to make us sit at the negotiating table from a position of weakness is not possible [to take place] and we have talked to the world with power and dignity, but we will never negotiate from a position of weakness."

The president said sanctions had led to troubles for the Iranian people, affecting their lives.

But, Rouhani pointed out, the sanctions will bear no fruit for the enemies.

In response to a question about the outcome of Iran's efforts to implement its proposed plan, known as the Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), for ensuring security in the Persian Gulf, Rouhani said, "It is clear to the world that there will be no peace in this region without Iran's presence. Regional stability occurs in the presence of an important and powerful country such as Iran."

He added that the HOPE initiative had been proposed to all countries during the 2019 United Nations General Assembly and sent to the secretary general as well as regional states and other countries, inviting them to participate.

Rouhani emphasized that every country in the region should enjoy peace without exception, otherwise the region would see stability fade away.

He said Iran insists on the initiative as "one of the best solutions to establish sustainable security in this region."

In an address to the 74th session of the General Assembly on September 25, 2019, President Rouhani said as a steward of maritime security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, Iran invites all countries that are affected by developments in the strategic region to join the country's new regional peace initiative.

Asked about the consequences of the potential re-election of Donald Trump as the US president, Rouhani said, "The ruling party in the United States does not matter to us. What is important to us is our own national interests."

He added that the United States started to exert maximum pressure on Iran more than 20 months ago but Tehran has managed to better the conditions over the past six months.

"Therefore, sanctions and maximum pressure have failed. We are faced with better circumstances in the region in comparison with two years ago and we have unity in the country."

Legal Case Launched Over Assassination of Gen. Soleimani



Iraqi people gather at the scene where Iran's Quds Force top commander General Qassem Soleimani and Iraq's PMU commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis were assassinated in a U.S. airstrike at Baghdad airport, Iraq, on February 13, 2020.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – A legal case has been launched to pursue through international channels the punishment of assassins of Lt. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Iran's Judiciary Chief Hojatoleslam Seyed Ebrahim Raeisi says.

Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in the southwestern city of Kerman on Sunday, Raeisi offered his condolences to the people of the city, the hometown of Lt. Gen. Soleimani, saying the great martyr was a source of honor not only to Iranians but also to the Muslim world.

"Judicial authorities in the Islamic Republic and the dear ones we contacted in Iraq, are pursuing the case

of martyrdom of Hajj Qassem Soleimani," he said.

"A case was formed in the Tehran prosecutor's office and judges were assigned to work with the Judiciary's International Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and follow up on the issue in the country in cooperation with the top judicial officials in Iraq," the official said.

The remarks came as a memorial service was held for Martyr Soleimani and his comrades in Tehran's Mosalla (Grand Prayer Grounds) on Thursday with throngs of people as well as high-ranking government and military officials in attendance.

General Soleimani, Abu Mahdi al-

Muhandis, who was the deputy head of Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'abi popular forces, and a number of their entourage were assassinated in a strike by American drones near Baghdad International Airport on January 3.

The White House and the Pentagon claimed responsibility for the assassination of General Soleimani in Iraq, saying the attack was carried out at the direction of U.S. President Donald Trump.

In the early hours of January 8, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) targeted the U.S. airbase of Ain al-Assad in retaliation for the U.S. move.

Meanwhile, a visiting Iraqi judicial delegation agreed to form a joint com-

mittee for inquiry into the case of the U.S. assassination of General Soleimani.

Senior Iraqi judicial officials met with Deputy Iranian Minister of Justice on Human Rights and International Affairs Mahmoud Abbasi in Tehran on Sunday.

The Iranian side said that the Iranian government and nation have always stood by the Iraqis during tough times, including in the fight against terrorism.

Abbasi said that Iran has paid heavy human costs for supporting Baghdad government and the Iraqi nation, an example of which was the assassination of General Soleimani.

He said that the assassination by the U.S. in Baghdad while the Iranian general was officially visiting Iraq as a sovereign country constituted an international crime in contravention of the UN Charter guaranteeing sovereignty of states.

Iran and Iraq would take the U.S. terrorist attack against commanders of the two sovereign states to the International Court of Justice, the official said.

In another development, Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah has unveiled a statue of General Qassem Soleimani in the southern Lebanese border town of Maroun al-Ras.

The move was to honor the Iranian general for his services in the war on terror in the Middle East region.

A video circulating on social media shows the moment the Lebanese celebrating the unveiling of the statue of Iranian top General.

The statue shows General Soleimani with his arm stretched out in front of him, pointing toward the Israeli-occupied territory.

Qatar: Talks With Saudis to Defuse Crisis Stall

DOHA (Dispatches) – Talks between Doha and Riyadh to resolve a two-year regional spat have stalled, Qatar's foreign minister says, after a flurry of diplomacy late last year raised hopes the damaging rift was being healed.

Saudi Arabia, along with its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt, cut all diplomatic, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017.

The four governments accused Doha of backing 'radical groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeking closer ties with Saudi arch-rival Tehran.

"We have always been very open for dialogue, since the start of the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (regional bloc) crisis," Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday.

"It's been almost three years since the crisis started. We are not the perpetrators of that crisis

and we've been very open and clear that we are open to any genuine intention to resolve this problem.

"We demonstrated this when there was an opening last year in November. Unfortunately these efforts didn't succeed and have been suspended at the beginning of January."

Two Doha-based diplomats said they did not see any indications that the nascent talks could be resumed for the foreseeable future following a burst of engagement at the end of 2019.

Neither side appeared willing to compromise enough for the talks to be viable, one told AFP.

Hopes of a breakthrough were raised when Saudi, along with Bahrain and the UAE, agreed to participate in the Persian Gulf Cup football tournament in Qatar in December having initially boycotted it.

Saudi King Salman then invited Qatar's ruler Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to a GCC summit in Riyadh in December,

but Qatar ultimately rebuffed Riyadh and instead sent then-prime minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Qatari officials nonetheless suggested that the summit and shuttle diplomacy that began in November had broken a "stalemate."

The rift has seen the two sides trade barbs on everything from access to the Muslim holy city of Mecca to alleged Twitter hacking.

It has also seen families divided, while Qatari businesses face increased costs, including projects linked to the 2022 World Cup, as well as complicating regional travel.

The Saudi-led bloc originally made 13 key demands to resolve the dispute, including Qatar shutting down broadcaster Al Jazeera, downgrading ties with Iran and closing a Turkish military base on its territory.

The pan-Arab Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper on Wednesday

Saudi Airstrike on Yemenis War Crime

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Iran has slammed the international community's silence on Saudi airstrikes on Yemen, the latest of which killed at least 31 civilians in the war-hit country's al-Jawf province Friday, calling it a war crime.

"The international community's silence on these war crimes has emboldened their perpetrators to kill more civilians," Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in Tehran on Sunday.

The United Nations office in Yemen said preliminary field reports indicated that "as many as 31 civilians were killed and 12 others injured in strikes that hit al-Hayjah area" in al-Jawf province.

The health ministry in al-Jawf province said women and children were among those killed, Yemen's al-Masirah TV reported. They were attacked as they gathered near the wreckage of a Saudi warplane shot down on Friday evening.

The spokesman condemned "the criminal attack by the Saudi-led

coalition forces and offered condolences to the bereaved families and the oppressed Yemeni people," IRNA news agency reported.

"Over the past several years, we have repeatedly witnessed that whenever Saudi-led coalition forces or their allies suffer humiliating defeats in the battlefield, they react by cowardly slaughtering women, children and civilians with American weapons," Mousavi said.

"Yesterday's crime in Jawf province is just one example among dozens of their war crimes," he added.

Saudi Arabia's state-run news agency quoted military spokesman Col. Turki al-Maliki Saturday as saying that the tornado warplane belonging to the kingdom's air force had been shot down over the province of Jawf on Friday.

Yemeni forces said they shot down the warplane with an advanced surface-to-air missile.

The spokesman for Yemen's Houthis Ansarullah movement

called the shoot-down a "fatal blow" to the aggressors, saying it indicated that Yemeni air defense units have made significant progress in the field of defense.

"The downing of the Tornado fighter jet in the skies of Jawf dealt a deadly blow to the Saudi aggressors," Mohammad Abdulsalam said on Sunday, according to Al-Masirah news channel.

"This shows that Yemeni air defense units have made great progress in the field of (anti-aircraft) defense," he said.

Stressing that Yemeni troops and popular forces will retaliate against recent air raids conducted by Saudi warplanes on Jawf that killed over 30 civilians, including women and children, Abdulsalam said, "The enemy, by committing such violent crimes, is seeking to cover up its consecutive defeats."

The Houthi Ansarullah movement released a video of its Friday shoot-down of the Tornado fighter jet.

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