

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) spokesman General Ramezan Sharif on Wednesday dismissed statements attributed to Brigadier General Morteza Qorbani about Iran attacking Tel Aviv from Lebanon.

"The remarks made by Brigadier General Morteza Qorbani have been distorted and misinterpreted by some media outlets," Sharif said. The spokesman also made it clear that General Qorbani is not an assistant to the IRGC's chief commander General Hussein Salami.

Kayhan International



TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran on Wednesday rejected France's interference in its internal affairs as unacceptable, saying Tehran will not tolerate Paris' meddling remarks. In a post on his Twitter page, Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi dismissed President Emmanuel Macron's call for Tehran to free two jailed French nationals. "The French should not forget that Iran is a sovereign state. Neither our government nor the judiciary will take any advice from anyone," Mousavi said. "Any interference in Iran's domestic matters is unacceptable to us," he added.

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Viewpoint

Iraq No Post-World War One Entity to Succumb to Foreign Plots

Tehran, Moscow Enhance Media Cooperation



Iran to Participate at FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championships



Turkey May Close Incirlik Air Base for U.S. Over Sanctions



U.S. Sanctions Iran's Shipping Lines, Biggest Airline

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The United States on Wednesday imposed new sanctions on Iran's biggest airline and its shipping industry.

Washington targeted three general sales agents of Mahan Air over what it claimed the role the airline has played in weapons of mass destruction proliferation, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters.

Pompeo announced the sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its China-based subsidiary, E-Sail Shipping, as well as Mahan Air. The move is meant to "put the world on notice those who engage in illicit transactions with these companies will risk exposure to sanctions for themselves," he said.

The preposterous claims fly in the face of repeated reports by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which has always confirmed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

The occupying regime of Israel, widely believed to possess hundreds of nuclear warheads, is on the receiving end of the United States' military aid.

In Iran, Mahan has the best reputation for safety. Mahan has managed to circumvent U.S. restrictions by buying spare parts and second-hand planes, including Airbus, from other countries.

Germany and France banned Mahan this year, and Italy will soon follow in response to U.S. pressure.

Mahan still flies to Spain and to Iranian neighbors such as the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Russia. Its Asian destinations also include China, India, Thailand and Malaysia.

The U.S. Treasury accused IRISL of being involved in smuggling aid from Iran to Yemen on behalf of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and its foreign paramilitary arm, the Quds Force.

The latest sanctions target Iranian businessman Abdolhussein Khedri and his companies Khedri Jahan Darya Co and Maritime Silk Road LLC for alleged shipping operations on behalf of the IRGC-QF.

Mahan Air has previously been blacklisted for alleged support it has provided to the IRGC-QF, Hezbollah and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, according to a Treasury Department statement.

The Treasury sanctions freeze any U.S. assets of those targeted and prohibit Americans from doing business with

them.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, in a statement, accused Iran of using its aviation and shipping industries to supply with weapons and contributing to humanitarian crises in Syria and Yemen.

In reality, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is the result of eight years of war which the U.S. and its allies have been waging on the Arab country with the help of many militant groups and the most brutal Takfiri terrorists.

Iran has been helping the Syrian government with funds and humanitarian assistance and the country's army with military advice, enabling the nation to redeem most of its territories from the occupation of terrorists.

In Yemen, all international humanitarian and rights groups blame the impoverished nation's humanitarian crisis on a devastating war being waged by Saudi Arabia.

The United States is the key supplier of weapons to the war, beside providing Saudi warplanes with coordinates of targets for bombing and mid-air fuelling.

Brian Hook, the top state department official for Iran, said the sanctions were designed to curb Iranian missile capabilities.

"We've seen an expansion under the Iran nuclear deal of Iranian ballistic missile testing and proliferation," Hook said.

Minister: Major Cyber Terrorism Thwarted

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran has foiled a major cyber attack on its infrastructure that was launched by a foreign government, the Iranian telecoms minister said on Wednesday, two months after reports of a U.S. cyber operation against the country.

U.S. officials told Reuters in October that the United States had carried out a secret cyber strike on Iran.

"We recently faced a highly organized and state-sponsored attack on our e-government infrastructure which was... repelled by the country's security shield," Muhammad Javad Azari-Jahromi, Iran's minister for communications and information technology, said.

"It was a very big attack," Azari-Jahromi said, adding that details would be revealed later.

In late September, Iran reviewed security measures at its key Persian Gulf oil and gas facilities, including preparedness for cyber attacks, following media reports of Washington weighing possible cyber attacks on Tehran.

Iran has long been on alert over the threat of cyber attacks from abroad. The United States and the occupying regime

of Israel covertly sabotaged Iran's nuclear program in 2009 and 2010 with the Stuxnet computer virus, in the first known instance of state-sponsored cyber terrorism.

Tensions in the Persian Gulf have escalated sharply since Trump last year withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and reimposed trade and financial sanctions on Tehran.

Citizens Warned About Visiting U.S.

Iran warned its citizens, particularly scientists, on Tuesday not to visit America, saying Iranians there were subjected to arbitrary and lengthy detention in inhuman conditions.

"Iranian citizens, particularly elites and scientists, are requested to seriously avoid traveling to America, even to take part in scientific conferences and even having an invitation," a travel advisory on the foreign ministry website said.

It cited, "America's cruel and one-sided laws toward Iranians, especially Iranian elites, and arbitrary and lengthy detention in completely inhuman conditions" as reasons for the travel advisory.

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American Warplanes Bomb Nearby Homes

Massive Attack Hits U.S. Base in Afghanistan



Security personnel arrive near the site of an attack near the Bagram airbase in Kabul, Dec. 11, 2019.

KABUL (Dispatches) -- A powerful bombing struck the main U.S. military base in Afghanistan on Wednesday, killing at least one person and injuring scores in a major attack that could scupper plans to revive peace talks between the United States and the Taliban.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which struck the Bagram air base north of Kabul.

"First, a heavy-duty Mazda vehicle struck the wall of the American base," said Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman. "Later several mujahideen equipped with light and heavy weapons were able to attack the American occu-

piers."

Abdul Shukoor Qudosi, the district governor of Bagram district, said 87 people were injured and one woman was killed.

Five troops from the former Soviet republic of Georgia, which is part of the U.S.-led coalition, were among those injured, the country's defense ministry said in a statement.

"A 30-minute clash also happened between the attackers, who obviously wanted to enter the base, and foreign forces," said Wahida Shahkar, a spokeswoman for the governor of Parwan province, which includes the Bagram

district.

Two attackers detonated vehicles laden with explosives at the southern entrance to the base, while five more opened fire. It was not immediately clear how many of the five gunmen were killed, Shahkar said.

A medical base being built for locals was badly damaged, the coalition of foreign forces in Afghanistan said in a statement. The Taliban denied this.

Shortly after the bombing, Afghan troops, special forces and intelligence officers cordoned off the perimeter of the base with armored personnel carriers. Heavily

armed soldiers kept residents far from the base gates.

Within minutes of the suicide bombing, U.S. fighter aircraft bombed the area, according to witnesses.

Outside the sprawling base, several homes, mostly belonging to the poor, were destroyed. A large mosque in the area was also badly damaged.

The attack comes shortly after President Donald Trump made a surprise visit to Bagram on November 28.

Trump called off talks with the Taliban in September after an attack by the group killed an American soldier. The U.S. looks to revive stalled peace talks with the militants who control more territory than at any point since 2001.

The militants hold sway over nearly half of Afghanistan, staging regular attacks that target foreign and Afghan forces, as well as Kabul government officials.

U.S. forces have remained bogged down there through the presidencies of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and now Donald Trump.

On Monday, a confidential trove of U.S. government documents made public by The Washington Post revealed that American officials have "constantly lied to" the US public about what has been going on in the now 18-year war on Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's former president Hamid Karzai argued Tuesday that Washington helped fuel corruption

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Suu Kyi Defends Myanmar Atrocities at Hague

THE HAGUE (Dispatches) -- Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, feted in the West as a heroine of democracy, on Wednesday defended her country's atrocities against Rohingya Muslims at the UN's top court in the Hague.

The Nobel Peace laureate spoke for about 30 minutes at the courtroom in defense of the actions of the Myanmar military that for years had kept her under house arrest.

She claimed that the military's actions, which have brought genocide allegations in a lawsuit filed by Gambia, were in fact a "clearance operation" in response to militant attacks against police stations in Rakhine State.

Suu Kyi then accused Gambia, acting on behalf of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, of making "incomplete and misleading" accusations and said the case should not be heard by the Hague.

Around 740,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh after a bloody crackdown by the Myanmar military in 2017 that UN investigators have already described as genocide.

On Tuesday, Suu Kyi listened with a stony face to accounts by lawyers of Rohingya

victims, including a mother whose one-year-old son was beaten to death and an eight-month-pregnant woman who was stamped on and then repeatedly raped.

Dildar Begum, a Rohingya widow from Tula Toli village in Myanmar, broke down in tears while describing the killings in her village she says were carried out by the Myanmar army and militias.

Suu Kyi said while disproportionate military force may have been used and civilians killed, the acts did not constitute genocide.

"Can there be genocidal intent on the part of a state that actively investigates, prosecutes and punishes soldiers and officers that are accused of wrong doing?" she claimed.

Last year, Myanmar's military announced that seven soldiers involved in a massacre of 10 Rohingya men and boys in the village of Inn Din in September 2017 had been sentenced to "10 years in prison with hard labor in a remote area".

They were the only security personnel the military has said it has punished over the 2017 operation. They were granted early release after less than a year in the prison.

One of the soldiers confirmed to Reuters

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