

Iran and Russia say West is disturbing peace in region



Moscow, January 1 (RHC)-- Iran and Russia have denounced attempts by Western states, the United States in particular, at increasing tensions in the Middle East region. "Thousands of miles away from its own borders, the United States is causing bloodshed and destruction against the people of Iraq and Syria in the name of defending itself," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said during a meeting Monday with his Russian counterpart in Moscow.

Zarif cited the latest airstrikes by U.S. forces against the positions of Popular Mobilization Units in western Iraq on Friday as an instance of Washington's efforts aimed at escalating tensions in the region.

Speaking at the same meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, "We see some of our Western colleagues artificially trying to inflame the situation," according to Russia's Sputnik news agency.

Washington's latest military aggression in Iraq killed at least 25 people and left another 51 injured, drawing widespread condemnations from groups and officials both inside Iraq and across the region.

Tehran called the attacks "a clear example of terrorism." Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the U.S. had not informed Russia about the strikes.

Zarif remarked that contrary to what the U.S. is doing, Iran and Russia are seeking peace in the region. He cited the joint naval maneuvers in recent days which were held with the collaboration of Iranian,

Russian and Chinese forces in the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman as an instance of efforts towards bolstering peace and security in the region.

He also cited separate proposals presented by Tehran and Moscow aimed at defusing regional tensions. The proposals “have very much in common,” he said, referring to Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE), which has been put forth by President Hassan Rouhani of Iran, as well as the Collective Security Concept initiative, drawn up by Moscow.

Lavrov echoed Zarif’s remarks by saying that Russia and Iran were opposed to foreign incendiary attempts “with a proposal to establish equal, mutually beneficial cooperation in this important region.”

The Iranian top diplomat also said the Russo-Iranian ties were at their best, and described Moscow “as a great and important neighbor and a major international power.”

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