

Iranian foreign minister calls for investigation into recent attacks in Iraq



Screen image grab taken from Kurdistan 24 TV channel on February 19, 2021

Tehran, February 28 (RHC)-- Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said recent rocket attacks against U.S. positions in Iraq are "suspicious" and the perpetrators must be identified. Following a meeting in Tehran with his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein, Zarif said on Saturday the series of attacks could be aimed at damaging Iran-Iraq relations.

"We emphasise on the necessity of action by the Iraqi government to identify the perpetrators of these incidents," Zarif said, according to a statement by the Iranian foreign ministry.

For his part, Hussein assured Zarif that "Baghdad will not allow these incidents to tarnish the great relations between the two countries."

A volley of rockets on Monday targeted the fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, where the US and other embassies are based. It came days after rockets hit the airport near the northern city of Erbil, killing a contractor with the US-led military coalition and wounding several others.

The U.S. blamed the attacks on pro-Iran factions operating under the umbrella of the Hashd al-Shaabi paramilitary forces that are part of the Iraqi state's security apparatus. In retaliation, the US on Thursday launched air raids on facilities in eastern Syria along the border with Iraq that are used by Iran-backed militias.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a United Kingdom-based war monitor, said militia border posts were destroyed in the attacks and reported at least 22 deaths. The death toll could not be independently verified.

U.S. President Joe Biden said the attacks -- his first military action since taking office about a month ago -- were meant to show Iran it "can't act with impunity." The Iranian government has denied any involvement.

During his talks with Hussein, Zarif condemned the U.S. attacks as "illegal" and a violation of Iraq and Syria's sovereignty.

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