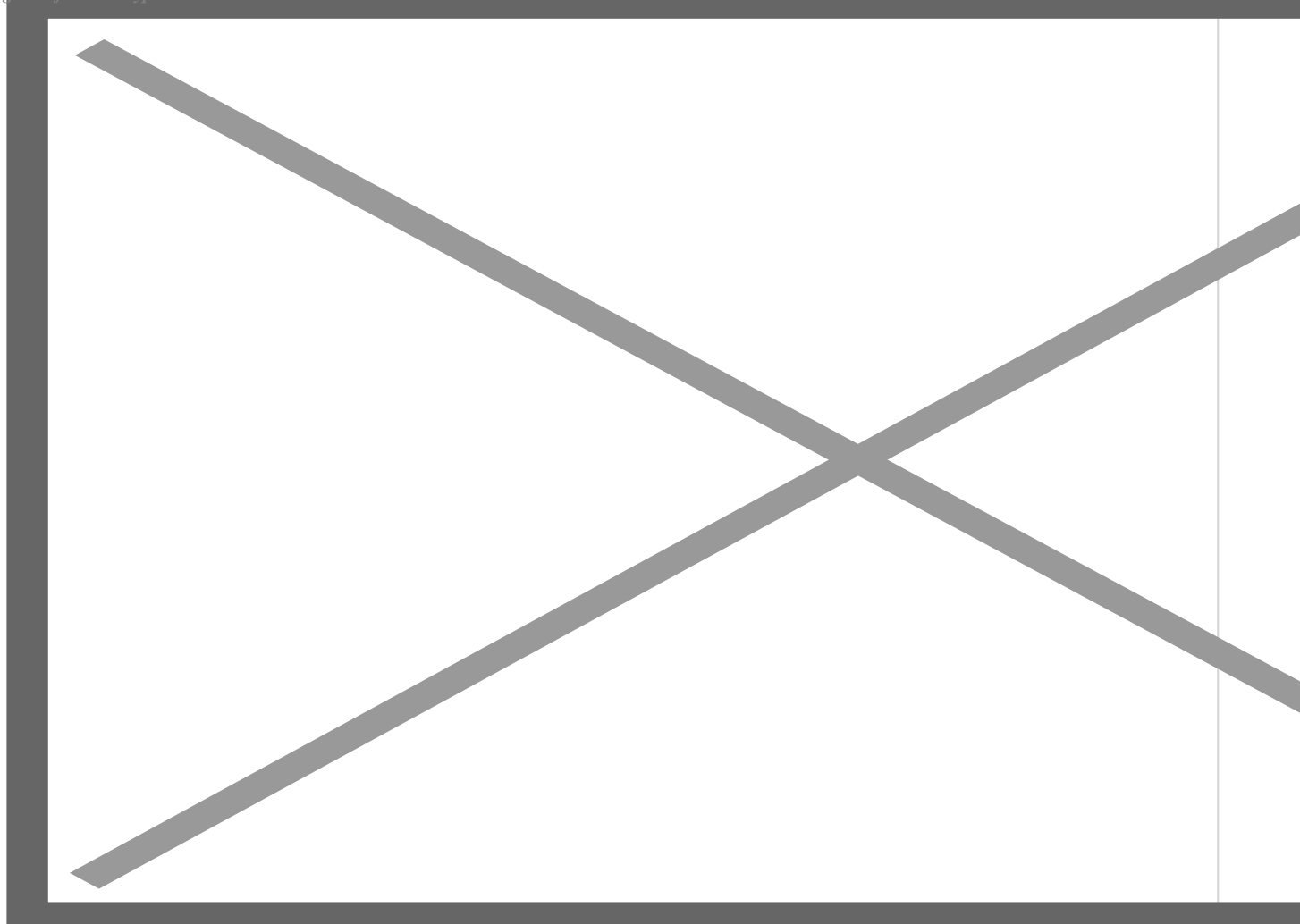


*Iranian commander says  
expulsion of U.S. troops is most  
important step to restore security  
to West Asia*

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**U.S. Army soldiers walk around K1 Air Base northwest of Kirkuk in northern Iraq before a planned U.S. pullout, on March 29, 2020. (Photo: AFP)**

Tehran, March 2 (RHC)-- A senior Iranian military official says expulsion of the United States from the West Asia region is the most important step toward restoration of security and stability to the region.

The Iranian Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff for Coordination Brigadier General Ali Abdollahi made the remarks in a Monday meeting with the senior advisor to Iraq's interior minister and his accompanying military delegation in Tehran.

"Expulsion of the United States is the most important step toward the restoration of security and stability to the region," the Iranian general said while commending the measure taken by the Iraqi parliament to approve a legislation that seeks to expel American forces from the Arab country.

Pointing to the significance of fighting terrorism in the region, the Iranian commander said the assassination of top Iranian and Iraqi anti-terror commanders Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis was an "unforgivable crime" committed by the United States.

The U.S. military assassinated General Soleimani, the commander of the Quds Force of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), along with Muhandis, deputy head of Iraq's Hashd al-Sha'abi, and their companions by targeting their vehicle outside Baghdad International Airport on January 3, 2020.

The cowardly act of terror was carried out under the direction of former US President Donald Trump, with the Pentagon taking responsibility for the strike. General Soleimani is viewed by the world's freedom-seeking people as the key figure in defeating Daesh, the world's most notorious terrorist group, in the Middle East battles.

Iran's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations has warned of a growing tendency among some countries to resort to threats or use of force under the pretext of exercising their right to self-defense, referring to the assassination by the US of general Soleimani as a case in point.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi said the U.S. administration, through its communication to the Security Council president, desperately attempted to "justify such an obvious act of terrorism through a series of fabrications and an extremely arbitrary interpretation of the Charter's Article 51."

However, he added: "Many international law scholars and practitioners have categorically rejected such an interpretation of the right to self-defense."

Elsewhere in his remarks, Abdollahi said Iraq needs to boost its capabilities to counter the remnants of terrorist groups and prevent activities of drug and human trafficking gangs in order to boost security and stability of all regional countries.

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