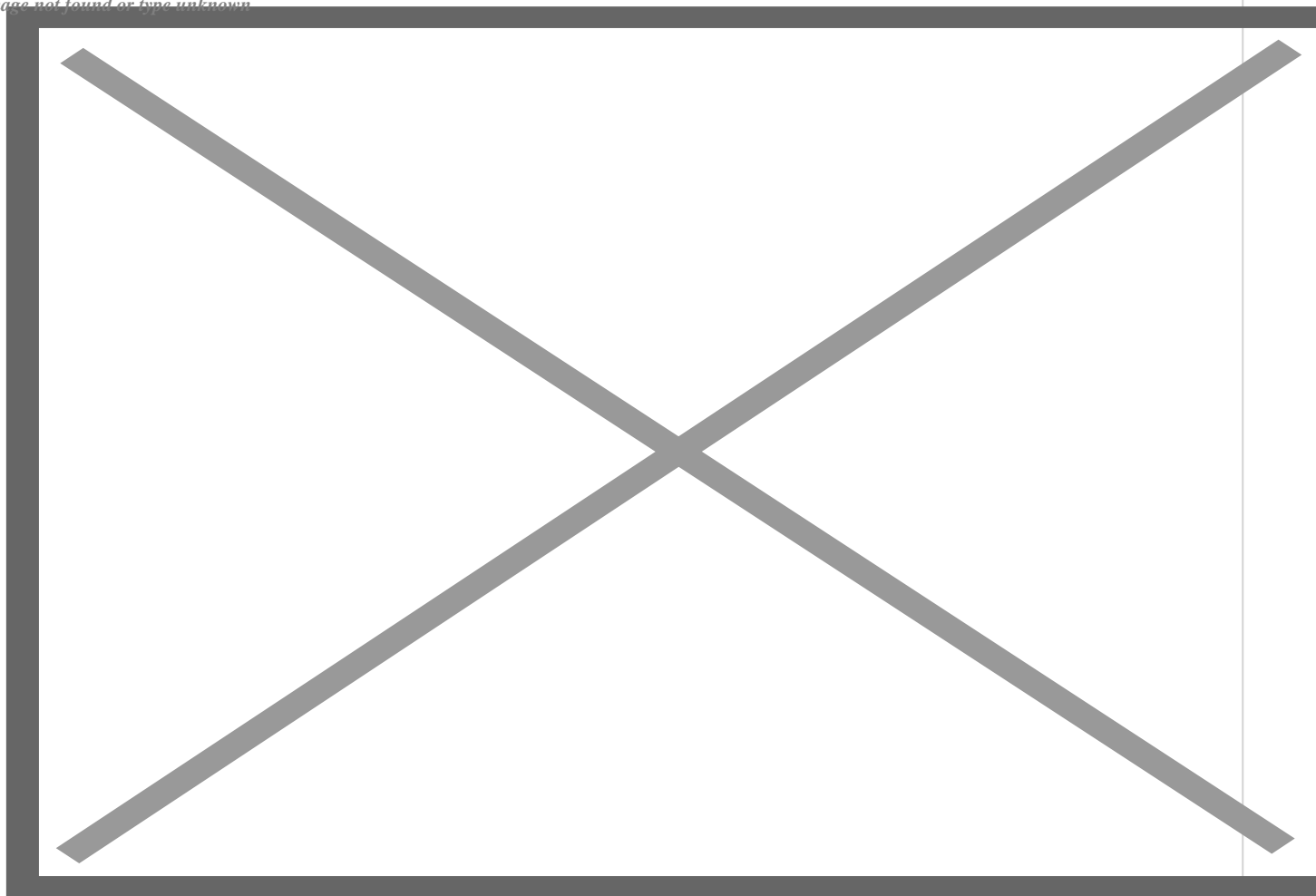


Rockets hit Baghdad airport compound near U.S. airbase

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A handout picture released by the Facebook page of the Iraqi ministry of transportation, shows a damaged stationary aircraft on the tarmac of Baghdad airport [Iraqi Ministry of Transportation/AFP]

Baghdad, January 28 (RHC)-- At least three rockets have landed in the Baghdad International Airport compound and near an adjacent U.S. airbase, damaging one disused civilian aircraft, Iraqi police sources said.

The rockets hit Baghdad International Airport's runways or parking areas, a source at the interior ministry said, noting that a "civilian plane has been hit and damaged." Responsibility for the attack was not immediately claimed. The officials did not report any other damage or any injuries in Friday's attack, adding that the damaged Iraqi Airways aircraft was out of use.

Iraq's state news agency reported, citing the country's aviation authority, that there was no disruption to travel. On its social media pages, Iraqi Airways posted pictures of the damage, consisting of a hole near the nose of the plane. No flights were affected by the attack, the airline added.

The U.S. airbase, known as Camp Victory, is located around the perimeter of Baghdad's civilian airport. Rocket attacks, which the United States and some Iraqi officials blame on Iran-aligned Shia armed groups who oppose the U.S. military presence in the region, have regularly hit the complex in recent years.

Earlier this month, at least four rockets targeted the US embassy in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, wounding two civilians, according to two Iraqi security officials. Three of the missiles struck within the perimeter of the embassy, while another hit a school located in a nearby residential complex, injuring two people.

The Green Zone hosts most foreign diplomatic missions, including the U.S. embassy and the Iraqi prime minister's house. It has been repeatedly targeted by rocket attacks since the killing of Iran's General Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi commander Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis in a U.S. drone attack in January 2020.

The armed groups have pledged revenge for Soleimani's killing and have conditioned the end of the attacks on the full exit of American troops from the country. Baghdad and Washington agreed in a fourth and final round of the strategic dialogue on July 26 to withdraw US forces from Iraq by the end of 2021.

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