

Iranian president affirms ultimate revenge is to end U.S. presence in region



Tehran, January 8 (RHC)-- President Hassan Rouhani says ending the United States' presence in the region will be the "ultimate revenge" to be exacted on Washington by the regional nations.

President Rouhani was addressing a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, after Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) struck two U.S. bases in Iraq in response to an American drone strike that assassinated Commander of the IRGC's Quds Force Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad on Friday.

"We believe that the U.S. should receive its chief response from the nations of the region," the Iranian president said. "They cut off dear General Soleimani's hand in this atrocity. The revenge for this is for us to sever and cut off the U.S.'s feet from this region."

Among others killed in the drone airstrike was the second-in-command of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis. Soon after the assassinations, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Washington was to face a "harsh revenge" for the atrocity.

Early on Wednesday, the IRGC fired volleys of ballistic missiles at Ain al-Assad Airbase in the western Iraqi Anbar Province, and another outpost in Erbil, the capital of the semi-autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan, both of which house U.S. forces.

Rouhani said Washington would not be able to avoid the repercussions of the assassinations as the atrocity had “seared the hearts of hundreds of millions of freedom-seeking people in the world.” Contrary to Washington’s divisive intentions, Lt. Gen. Soleimani’s assassination strengthened the unity between the Iranian and Iraqi nations, President Rouhani said.

The first response the U.S. was dealt with after the assassination manifested itself in the form of arduous millions-strong funeral processions held across Iran and Iraq for those martyred in the assassinations, the Iranian president said.

He also expressed gratitude for Iraq’s top Shia cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for condoling with Ayatollah Khamenei over Soleimani’s martyrdom. He described the consolatory message as “a big slap on the mouth” of the US given the fact that the religious authority was a figure revered by Iraqis of all religious affiliations and ethnicities.

Rouhani pointed to a recent vote by the Iraqi parliament in favor of withdrawal of all US-led forces from the Arab country and said, “Through its courageous vote, the Iraqi parliament paved the way for the US’s eternal expulsion from Iraq, and, God willing, the region in the future.”

“Americans would be wise not to perpetrate any more atrocities at this juncture,” Rouhani said. However, he added, should they commit any such mistake, the Iranian people and Armed Forces are prepared for countermeasures.

He warned that another act of aggression by the U.S. would be met with “a stronger response.”

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