

# *Russia says Iran is victim of terrorism*

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**Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova**

Moscow, January 16 (RHC)-- Russia has rejected the United States' fresh allegations of link between Iran and the al-Qaeda militant group that launched the September 11, 2001 attacks, describing the Islamic Republic as a "victim of terrorism" and a "pioneer" in the counter-terror battle.

Speaking to IRNA news agency on Saturday, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said there is a lot of evidence suggesting Iran's serious fight against terrorist groups, for example those operating in Syria and Iraq.

On Tuesday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo used his last days in office to accuse Iran, without any evidence, of being the al-Qaeda's "new home base," and said the claims were part of, what he called, publicizing "declassified U.S. intelligence."

Iran is "the new Afghanistan," Pompeo alleged at a news conference in Washington. "Unlike in Afghanistan, when al-Qaeda was hiding in the mountains, al-Qaeda today is operating under the hard shell of the Iranian regime's protection."

Tehran said the "baseless" accusations show Washington's frustration and the failure of its so-called maximum pressure campaign against Iran. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif dismissed the allegations as "warmongering lies," pointing out to close ties between the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Arabia, the home country of most of the 9/11 terrorists.

Elsewhere in her remarks, Zakharova said that according to available evidence, "Iran is itself a victim of terrorism and among the pioneers in the fight against terrorist outfits." The Islamic Republic is an honest country in the fight against terrorism, she noted, adding that there no information on Tehran's possible links to al-Qaeda.

U.S. officials are silent on Iran's effective battle against terrorists, and their approach shows a smear campaign against Tehran, Zakharova emphasized. Pompeo's claims came despite American authorities' acknowledgement of Washington's role in creating terrorist groups in the region, including al-Qaeda and Daesh.

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