

Iran launches missile attacks against US forces inside Iraq in 'revenge' for Qassem Soleimani assassination

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VIDEO: Iranian press claims the Revolutionary Guard Corps has hit Al-Asad air base with 'tens of missiles'. (ABC News)

At least two military bases housing US troops in Iraq have come under fire from "at least a dozen ballistic missiles" fired from Iran, the Pentagon says.

"It's clear these missiles were launched from Iran and targeted at least two Iraqi military bases hosting US military & coalition personnel at Al Asad and Erbil," Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah tweeted.

Iranian state TV said Tehran launched "tens" of surface-to-surface missiles at the Al Asad airbase in response to America's killing of a top Iranian general.

"The fierce revenge by the Revolutionary Guards has begun," Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said in a statement on a Telegram channel, according to the New York Times.

Iranian state television also said at least 80 people were killed in attacks involving 15 missiles launched on US targets in Iraq, adding that none of the missiles were intercepted.

State TV, citing a senior Revolutionary Guards source, also said Iran had 100 other targets in the region in its sights if Washington took any retaliatory measures.

It also said US helicopters and military equipment were "severely damaged".

The attack was launched at 1:30am local time in Iraq.

Iranian state TV described the attacks as Tehran's revenge operation for the [killing of top general Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike near Baghdad airport last week](#).

US President Donald Trump took to Twitter to say "all is well!".

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Key points:

- The Pentagon said it would "take all necessary measures" to protect US troops and allies
- Iran's Revolutionary Guard issued a statement warning the US not to hit back
- Scott Morrison said all Australian troops and diplomatic staff stationed in Iraq were currently safe

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"Missiles launched from Iran at two military bases located in Iraq. Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now," he tweeted.

"So far, so good! We have the most powerful and well equipped military anywhere in the world, by far! I will be making a statement tomorrow morning."

External Link: Donald J Trump: All is well! Missiles launched from Iran at two military bases located in Iraq. Assessment of casualties & damages taking place now. So far, so good! We have the most powerful and well equipped military anywhere in the world, by far! I will be making a statement tomorrow morning.

However, Iranian state television said that Mr Trump's tweet tried to downplay damage caused by Iran's missile attacks.

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Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said the attacks were "proportionate measures in self-defence".

"We do not seek escalation or war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression," he tweeted.

External Link: Twitter Javad Zarif: Iran took & concluded proportionate measures in self-defence under Article 51 of UN Charter targeting base from which cowardly armed attack against our citizens & senior officials were launched. We do not seek escalation or war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression.

The country's Telecommunication Minister Mohammad-Javad Azari Jahromi tweeted: "Get the hell out of our region".

Hessameddin Ashena, an adviser to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, said that any US retaliation to Iran's missile attacks on American targets in Iraq could lead to an all-out war in the Middle East.

"Any adverse military action by the US will be met with an all-out war across the region. The Saudis, however, could take a different path — they could have total peace!" he said on Twitter.

A senior official in Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's office said Iran's response to the killing of General Soleimani so far had been the "weakest" of the Iranian revenge scenarios, state TV reported.



VIDEO: The Pentagon has confirmed at least a dozen ballistic missiles have been launched from inside Iran (ABC News)

The Revolutionary Guard issued a statement warning the US and its regional allies not to hit back.

"We are warning all American allies, who gave their bases to its terrorist army, that any territory that is the starting point of aggressive acts against Iran will be targeted," The Guard said.

It also threatened to attack US ally Israel.

All diggers safe, says PM



for 300 Australians in Iraq

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PHOTO: Erbil airbase and Al Asad airbase were hit in the attacks. (ABC News)

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said all Australian troops and diplomatic staff stationed in Iraq were currently safe.

Speaking at a press conference on Kangaroo Island, Mr Morrison said he was in frequent contact with the Chief of the Defence Force, Angus Campbell, as well as Defence Minister Linda Reynolds and Foreign Affairs Minister Marise Payne.

He said he directed General Campbell to take whatever actions were necessary to protect and defend Australian troops and diplomatic staff in Iraq.

Earlier, Opposition Leader Anthony Albanese said Australian troops were located "just next door" to the airbases which were attacked.



PHOTO: US President Donald Trump visited the Al Asad airbase in Iraq on December 26, 2018. (AP: Andrew Harnik)

About 450 Defence Force personnel are deployed to the Middle East, including around 300 in and around Baghdad and the nearby Taji base.

Late last week the Australian Government instructed non-essential staff at its Embassy in Baghdad to leave Iraq.





PHOTO: Al Asad airbase is in Iraq's western Anbar desert. (AP: Nasser Nasser)

The attacks came hours after the burial of General Soleimani, which was delayed [after more than 50 people were crushed to death in a stampede at his funeral](#).

As the head of Iran's elite Quds Force, he was [one of the most powerful military figures in the region](#).

After the strikes, a former Iranian nuclear negotiator posted a picture of the Islamic Republic's flag on Twitter, appearing to mimic Mr Trump, who posted an American flag following the killing of General Soleimani.

Al Asad airbase — which translates to "the lion" in Arabic — is Iraq's second-largest airbase, located approximately 180 kilometres west of Baghdad.

Australian special forces captured the base from the Iraqi military in 2003. In 2011 it was handed back to the Iraqi Government.

Mr Trump made a surprise visit to the base just after Christmas in 2018.

Why the killing of General Soleimani is such a big deal



The death of Iranian Major General Qassem Soleimani is a watershed moment, even in the long and bloody history of Middle East conflict.



PHOTO: US Vice-President Mike Pence spoke to US troops at Al Asad airbase on November 23, 2019. (Reuters: Jonathan Ernst)

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