

Donald Trump responds to Iranian missile strikes with threat of new sanctions

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PHOTO: US President Donald Trump has made a statement about Iran. (Reuters: Jonathan Ernst)

United States President Donald Trump says Iran appears to be "standing down" and no Americans have been harmed in ballistic missile strikes on two Iraqi bases housing US troops.

Speaking for the first time since Iran's attack, Mr Trump opened up his White House address shortly after 11.30am on Wednesday (local time) saying, "As long as I'm President of the United States, Iran will never be allowed to have a nuclear weapon".

"No Americans were harmed in last night's attack by the Iranian regime. We suffered no casualties," Mr Trump said during the address, which signalled a desire to de-escalate the crisis with Iran.

Mr Trump also declared the US would impose additional economic sanctions on Iran and that he would personally, "ask NATO to become much more involved in the Middle East process".

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Key points:

- Mr Trump declared additional economic sanctions on Iran
- He stopped short of making any direct threat of military action against Iran
- The Iranian strikes had come days after Mr Trump authorised the killing of General Qassem Soleimani

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"The fact that we have this great military and equipment, however, does not mean we have to use it. We do not want to use it. American strength, both military and economic, is the best deterrent," he said.

He added that Americans should be "extremely grateful and happy" with the outcome.

Mr Trump stopped short of making any direct threat of military action against Iran.

He urged world powers, including Russia and China, to [abandon the 2015 nuclear accord with Iran](#) and work toward a new agreement.

"We must all work together toward making a deal with Iran that makes the world a safer and more peaceful place," he said.

Why America and Iran hate each other



They haven't had formal diplomatic relations for decades, and at times appear on the brink of war. But why?

Strikes a retaliation to US killing of General Soleimani



PHOTO: Erbil airbase and Al Asad airbase were hit in the attacks.

(ABC News)

The Iranian strikes came days after Mr Trump authorised the targeted killing of General Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds Force.

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, [addressed a gathering of Iranians chanting "Death to America"](#) earlier on Wednesday, and said [Iran's attacks were a "slap on the face"](#) against the United States and urged US troops to leave the region.

Iranian Foreign Minister said Iran took "proportionate measures" in self-defence and did not seek an escalation.

External Link: [Twitter Javad Zarif: Iran took & concluded proportionate measures in self-defense 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.](#)

Iranian state television said Iran had fired 15 ballistic missiles from its territory at US targets in its neighbour Iraq early on Wednesday.

The Pentagon said [Al Asad air base and another facility in Erbil were struck](#).

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Iranian state television had said 80 "American terrorists" had been killed and US helicopters and military equipment had been damaged. But it did not say how it obtained that information.

Australia, Germany, Denmark, Norway and Poland said [none of their troops in Iraq were hurt](#).

Britain, which also has personnel in Iraq, condemned the Iranian action and said Tehran, "should not repeat these reckless and dangerous attacks".

Iraq said its forces did not suffer casualties.

More than 5,000 US troops remain in Iraq along with the other foreign forces in a coalition that has trained and backed Iraqis against the threat of Islamic State militants.

Iran deliberately avoided US casualties: government sources



VIDEO: Iranian Revolutionary Guard missiles hitting Al Asad airbase (ABC News)

Mr Trump's reaction in the immediate aftermath of the attacks had been to [say on Twitter](#), "All is well!" and that Washington was assessing damage.

His early tweet and the comment by Iran's Foreign Minister about not seeking retaliation had acted to soothe some [initial concerns about a wider war](#) and calmed jittery financial markets.

US and European government sources said they believed Iran had deliberately sought to avoid US military casualties in its missile strikes to prevent an escalation.

Mr Trump, who was impeached last month and faces an election this year, had [threatened to target 52 Iranian cultural sites](#) if Iran retaliated for General Soleimani's killing.

On Wednesday, an Iranian army spokesman had denied "foreign media reports" suggesting there had been some kind of coordination between Iran and the US before the attack to allow bases to be evacuated, Iran's Fars news agency said.

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.

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PHOTO: The Al Assad airbase in Iraq was targeted by Iranian missile strikes. (AP: Nasser Nasser)

Iraq's Foreign Ministry said it rejected Iran's missile attack on Iraqi military bases housing US troops and would summon Tehran's ambassador in Baghdad to convey its protest.

"The Foreign Ministry rejects these attacks and considers them a violation of Iraqi sovereignty," it said in a statement.

"It stresses that Iraq is an independent state and that its internal security is its priority. We will not allow it to become a battlefield.

"The Foreign Ministry will summon the Islamic Republic of Iran's ambassador and convey this to him."

ABC/Reuters

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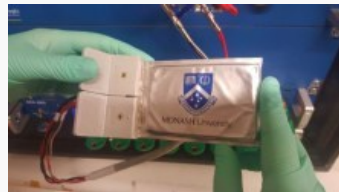
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