

Iraq, Syria accuses US of violating their sovereignty

Iran calls attacks 'strategic mistake'

International Desk

Iraq and Syria strongly condemned the US airstrikes on their soils, accusing Washington of violating their sovereignty and undermining the stability of the region.

The US launched deadly overnight airstrikes against what it called Iran-backed groups in Iraq and Syria and promised more to come in retaliation for a deadly attack on US troops in Jordan on Sunday.

Washington blamed Iran for the Sunday's drone attack on its forces in Jordan, but did not strike inside Iranian territory, with both Washington and Tehran seemingly keen to avoid all-out war.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby claimed the warplanes struck more than 85 targets at seven facilities utilized by Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps and the groups that they sponsor, three of them in Iraq and four in Syria.

"These targets were carefully selected to avoid civilian casualties," he added.

But Iraqi government spokesman Bassem al-Awadi said civilians were among at least 16 people killed in the US strikes in western Iraq.

General Yehia Rasool, a spokesman for Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, in a statement on Saturday condemned the US strikes as a "violation of Iraqi sovereignty," warning of "disastrous consequences" for the country and beyond.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry also on Saturday lashed out at the US for its attacks in eastern Syria, ac-



A destroyed building is pictured at the site of a US airstrike in Al-Qaim, Iraq, on February 3, 2024. **REUTERS**

cluding Washington of being a primary source of global instability. In a statement, the ministry said the US military forces are threatening international security and peace through attacks on nations, peoples, and sovereignty, and escalating conflicts in the Middle East.

The ministry accused the US of attempting to revive terrorist activities in the region.

The Syrian army said "a number of civilians and soldiers" were killed in the strikes in eastern Syria.

'Strategic mistake'

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said the overnight operation was "another strategic mistake by the US government, which will have no result other than intensifying tension and instability."

"The US military attacks on Iraq, Syria and Yemen merely provide for the goals of the Zionist re-

gime," he said, referring to US ally Israel.

The American strikes were "a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and Syria, of international law and a flagrant violation of the United Nations charter", Kanani added.

Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Saturday condemned US strikes, saying Washington had poured "oil on the fire" in the Middle East.

The US "bears responsibility for the consequences of this brutal aggression against both Iraq and Syria, which pour oil on the fire," the group said in a statement issued in English.

"We confirm that the region will not witness stability or peace except by stopping the Zionist (Israeli) aggression and the crimes of genocide and ethnic cleansing against our people in the Gaza Strip."

Russia also reacted to the attacks, accusing the US of "sowing chaos

and destruction" in the Middle East.

"Washington, confident in its impunity, is continuing its sowing of chaos and destruction in the Middle East," Moscow's Foreign Ministry said, adding that it "decisively condemned" the strikes. US President Joe Biden underlined that the overnight strikes were only a beginning. "Our response began today. It will continue at times and places of our choosing," he said in a statement. His National Security Council spokesman said Washington "did inform the Iraqi government prior to the strikes," but his remark drew an angry denial from Baghdad.

'Unfounded claim'

The Iraqi government spokesman called it an "unfounded claim crafted to mislead international public opinion" and the foreign ministry said it would call in the US charge d'affaires in Baghdad to

deliver a formal protest.

Relations between the two governments have soured in recent months after Washington carried out previous airstrikes against resistance groups in Iraq in response to a flurry of attacks on US-led troops.

The two governments opened talks on the future of the US-led troop presence late last month after repeated demands from Prime Minister Al-Sudani for a timetable for their withdrawal.

The United States has some 900 troops in Syria and 2,500 in Iraq as part of an international coalition against the Daesh, a terrorist group that once controlled swathes of both countries.

Its troops in Iraq are deployed at the invitation of Baghdad, but those in Syria are deployed in areas outside the control of the Damascus government.

They operate out of bases in the Kurdish-held northeast or in a small pocket of territory along the borders with Iraq and Jordan. The Syrian military demanded on Saturday that Washington withdraw its troops.

"The occupation of parts of Syrian territory by US forces cannot continue," it said.

US and coalition troops have been attacked more than 165 times in Iraq, Syria and Jordan by the resistance groups since the beginning of Israel's onslaught on the Gaza Strip, which has killed more than 27,000 Palestinians so far.

The attacks are in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

The soldiers killed Sunday were the first American military deaths from hostile fire in the upsurge of violence.

Iran fights back to send Japan packing



Sports Desk

Alireza Jahanbakhsh scored from the spot in the sixth minute of stoppage time as Iran came from behind to beat Japan 2-1 and head into the AFC Asian Cup semifinals.

It was a game of different halves in Al Rayyan's Education City Stadium as the Blue Samurai – the most decorated team in the competition with four trophies – drew the first blood through Hidemasa Morita's 28th-minute strike from inside the box in a cagy first half before a much-improved performance saw Iran dominate after the break.

Amir Qalenoee's men were rewarded for their brave display 10 minutes into the second period when Sardar Azmoun's pinpoint pass released Mohammad Mohebbi behind the Japanese backline before the Rostov winger's low drive went past goalkeeper Zion Suzuki into the bottom corner.

Azmoun thought he gave Team Melli a well-deserved lead with a remarkable finish in the 63rd minute, only to see his goal chalked off by the linesman for a marginal offside, and Mohebbi could have doubled his tally for the night but his free header on the far post hit the side netting four minutes later.

Iran kept digging in for the winner and just when the two sides seemed to be heading into an additional 30 minutes of extra time the pressure paid off as Hossein Kan'ani was brought down in the box by Kou Itakura, convincing the referee to blow in his whistle for a spot kick.

While sections of Iranian fans turned their back to the Japanese goal as they couldn't bear to watch the penalty being taken, Feyenoord midfielder Jahanbakhsh kept his composure to bury the ball into the top-left corner, sending his fellow citizens in the stands into raptures. Having played to a nervy and frustrating shootout victory over Syria less than 72 hours before the game, not to mention missing prolific striker Mahdi Taremi through suspension, Iran was clearly the ultimate underdog heading into Saturday's game, but Qalenoee and his men deserve all the credit for outplaying the pretournament favorites in the second half and staying on course for a first trophy in the continent's flagship international tournament since 1976.

Raisi: Iran among world's top 10 in space technology

Satellite launches foil plots to isolate Iran

National Desk

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said the country is now among the world's top 10 countries in the field of aerospace technology following the latest successful launch of satellites into space. Addressing a Saturday

ceremony in commemoration of the National Space Technology Day, Raisi praised the latest launch of homegrown satellites as a major development that neutralized Western sanctions and foiled enemy plots to isolate the nation. Iran successfully sent homegrown Mahda re-

search satellite, along with two research cargos, to space onboard the domestically developed and manufactured Simorgh (Phoenix) satellite launch vehicle (SLV) late last month. Mahda reportedly weighs 32 kilograms and its primary task is to test the

satellite-related subsystems, verify the function of Simorgh SLV in dispensing space cargos, and evaluate the performance of new designs and the reliability of indigenous technologies in space.

The president said Iran's progress in the field of aerospace was a realization of the "we can" motto, and a definite sign of turning sanctions and threats into opportunities.

He said Iranian scientists are presenting noteworthy innovations, achievements and products at the same time that enemies are trying to foster a sense of despair by means of their mainstream media.

Raisi said the Iranian nation is after establishing a strong presence in space and will succeed against all odds.

The president thanked the Iranian Space Agency (ISA) for its steady progress in the aerospace sector.

Raisi said Iran is utilizing space technologies in various spheres, including agriculture, management of water and natural resources, identifying min-

eral deposits, and ensuring the security of borders.

Commercializing space technology

The Iranian president also underlined the necessity of commercializing the space technology in order to create wealth for the country.

He also called for stronger presence of private knowledge-based firms in the aerospace field, stating that those companies must contribute their share more than ever.

Raisi also praised the cooperation among the Iranian Armed Forces, the Defense Ministry, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and other institutions involved in the aerospace, stating that Iran's Supreme Space Council directs all the related bodies.

Earlier, the Aerospace Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) had successfully put Soraya satellite into an orbit 750 kilometers above Earth in 11 minutes. The research satellite, manufactured by the ISA, was launched with a

Qaem-100 space launch vehicle (SLV). Qaem-100 is a three-stage SLV with solid fuel developed by the IRGC Aerospace Force.

Following the satellite launch, the UK, France and Germany in a joint statement criticized the launch of the Soraya satellite.

"We have longstanding concerns over Iran's activity related to ballistic missile technologies that are capable of delivering nuclear weapons. These concerns are reinforced by Iran's continued nuclear escalation beyond all credible civilian justification," read the statement. "We remain committed to taking every diplomatic step to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons and to hold Iran to account for its destabilizing activity in the region and internationally."

In response, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani decried an "interventionist" stance of the three European countries, saying Iran is entitled to use peaceful technologies for scientific advances in accordance with international law.

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Cartoonist

