Trump warns U.S. has 52 Iranian targets to hit if Tehran retaliates

Washington, January 4 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that his military would hit "very important" targets related to Iran if the Iranians want to take a retaliatory action against the US for the assassination of a senior military commander.

"We have ... targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level & important to Iran" said Trump is his Saturday tweet while making a reference to a hostage-taking situation in the US embassy in Tehran in 1979.

The threat came after Iranian authorities said they would show a harsh response to the US strikes that killed Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, the commander of Iran's elite Quds force, and a number of Iraqi anti-terror fighters, in Baghdad early on Friday.

Many inside the US and across the world have criticized Trump for ordering the air strikes that led to the assassination of Soleimani, saying the move could lead to a major conflict in the Middle East.

The United States is sending thousands of troops to the Mideast in preparation for such a potential conflict despite repeated claims by Trump that he wants the American forces extracted from the region.

Trump's new threats for targeting Iran comes as world leaders are urging Iran to exercise restraint over the assassination of Soleimani. Senior European Union diplomats spoke to Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday, calling for a de-escalation of the situation following US air strike in Baghdad.

The attacks, which also killed senior Iraqi anti-terror commanders and fighters, have sparked similar vows for revenge in the Arab country.

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