

Trump demands Iraq pay for air base if U.S. troops forced to withdraw



Washington, January 7 (RHC)-- Iraq should brace itself for sanctions that'll make the ones placed on Iran look pale in comparison if it kicks out the U.S. troops without first covering the costs that Washington spent on its airbase there, U.S. President Donald Trump said.

"We have a very extraordinarily expensive air base that's there. It cost billions of dollars to build, long before my time. We're not leaving unless they pay us back for it," Trump told reporters.

The punitive measures that the U.S. is ready to slap on its supposed ally in the fight against the Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS) will be even harsher than the crippling sanctions already in effect against Tehran, the U.S. leader said.

"If they do ask us to leave, if we don't do it in a very friendly basis, we will charge them sanctions like they've never seen before ever. It'll make Iranian sanctions look somewhat tame."

Trump's dire warning to Iraq comes after Iraqi MPs passed a non-binding resolution, championed by the country's caretaker prime minister, and asking the Iraqi government to expel foreign troops by cancelling

a request for military assistance from the US-led coalition.

The resolution, adopted earlier on Sunday, envisions that some of the foreign troops might still stay in Iraq for training purposes, but the number of foreign instructors deemed necessary should be reported back by the Iraqi authorities.

As he was unleashing his fiery tirade, Trump doubled down on his threat to wipe out Iranian cultural sites in a retaliation for potential future attacks from Tehran, which vowed to avenge the assassination of its top general, Qassem Soleimani, by the United States.

Accusing Iran of “torturing” and “maiming” American soldiers in suicide attacks and by planting roadside bombs, Trump suggested the attacks on the U.S. troops justify a potential war crime – the destruction of a nation’s cultural heritage.

Trump’s statement over the weekend that the U.S. might fire upon 52 Iranian sites, important to the Islamic Republic’s people and its culture, has courted controversy in the US with many of the Trump administration’s critics noting that Washington would mimic the methods of its declared adversary – Islamic State terrorists – notorious for damaging and destroying globally-significant cultural sites in Syria and Iraq.

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