

# Trump gives dramatic account of Soleimani's last minutes before death: CNN

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2020-01-18 16:16

PALM BEACH, Florida: US President Donald Trump gave a minute-to-minute account of the US drone strikes that killed Iranian military commander Qassem Soleimani in remarks to a Republican fund-raising dinner on Friday night, according to audio obtained by CNN.

With his typical dramatic flourish, Trump recounted the scene as he monitored the strikes from the White House Situation Room when Soleimani was killed.

The president spoke in a ballroom at his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, at a Republican event that raised \$10 million for Trump's 2020 re-election campaign and for the Republican National Committee.

Reporters were not allowed in for the event. CNN said it obtained an audio recording of Trump's remarks. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Jan. 3 killing of Soleimani at Baghdad airport prompted Iran to retaliate with missile strikes against US forces in Iraq days later and almost triggered a broad war between the two countries.

"They're together sir," Trump said military officials told him. "Sir, they have two minutes and 11 seconds. No emotion. 'Two minutes and 11 seconds to live, sir. They're in the car, they're in an armored vehicle. Sir, they have approximately one minute to live, sir. Thirty seconds. Ten, 9, 8 ...' "

"Then all of a sudden, boom," he said. "'They're gone, sir. Cutting off.'"

"I said, where is this guy?" Trump continued. "That was the last I heard from him."

It was the most detailed account that Trump has given of the drone strike, which has drawn criticism from some US lawmakers because neither the president nor his advisers have provided public information to back up their statements that Soleimani presented an "imminent" threat to Americans in the region.

CNN said that in the audio, Trump did not repeat that Soleimani was an imminent threat. Trump said Soleimani was "saying bad things about our country" before the strike, which led to his decision to authorize his killing.



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Trump: US was facing imminent threat of attack from Soleimani  
Trump says he believes Soleimani was targeting 'four embassies'

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# Lebanon security forces face off against protesters near parliament building in Beirut

Author:

Reuters

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Sat, 2020-01-18 16:00

BEIRUT: Security personnel fired tear gas and water cannons at protesters armed with little more than tree branches and sign posts in Beirut on Saturday in clashes near Lebanon's parliament.

According to a Red Cross statement issued on Saturday, 75 protesters have been injured during the standoff with security forces.

The latest clashes come after a cooling of tensions in the Lebanese capital, after largely peaceful protests which broke out across the country in October over the state of the economy turned increasingly violent, but people have filled the streets again this week.

They are furious at a ruling elite that has steered the country toward its worst economic crisis in decades.

Police wielding batons and firing tear gas have wounded dozens of people at protests in recent days. Anger at the banks – which have curbed people's access to their savings – started to boil over, with protesters smashing bank facades and ATMs on Tuesday night.

Lebanon's Internal Security Forces said on Saturday that police in Beirut were being "violently and directly" confronted at one of the entrances to the parliament. In a tweet, it called on people to leave the area for their own safety.

Witnesses said they saw young men hurling stones and flower pots toward riot police, while protesters tried to push through an entrance to a heavily barricaded district of central Beirut, which includes the parliament.

Hundreds of protesters marched and chanted against in the political class in other parts of the capital. A large banner at one of the rallies read: "If the people go hungry, they will eat their rulers."

The unrest, which stemmed from anger at corruption and the rising cost of living, forced Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri to resign in October. Feuding politicians have since failed to agree a new cabinet or rescue plan.



The Lebanese pound has lost nearly half its value, while dollar shortages have driven up prices and confidence in the banking system has collapsed.

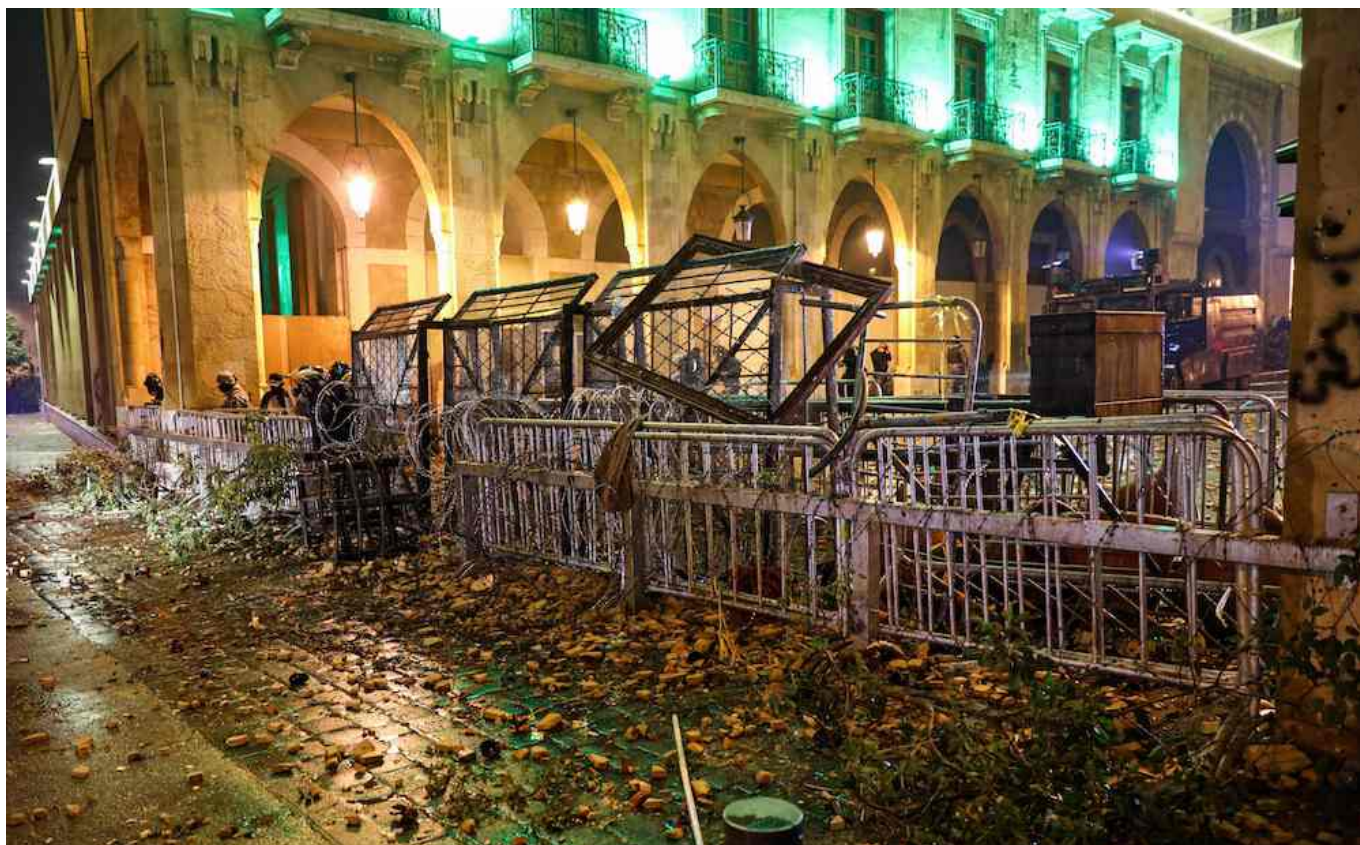
*(With Reuters)*











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## [Iran to send flight recorders from downed jet to Ukraine](#)

Author:

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1579361038569006100

Sat, 2020-01-18 15:18

TEHRAN: Iran will send the black box flight recorders from the Ukrainian jetliner that it accidentally shot down last week to Ukraine for further analysis, an Iranian official said Saturday.

Hassan Rezaeifer, the head of accident investigations for the civil aviation department, said it was not possible to read the black boxes in Iran, without elaborating. He said French, American and Canadian experts would help analyze them in Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.

He said if that doesn't work the black boxes will be sent to France. His remarks were carried by the semi-official Tasnim news agency.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard accidentally shot the plane down shortly after it took off from Tehran on Jan. 8, killing all 176 people on board. Hours earlier, the Guard had launched ballistic missiles at US troops in Iraq in response to the US airstrike that killed Iran's top commander, Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Officials say lower-level officers mistook the plane for a US cruise missile.

Iranian officials initially said the crash was caused by a technical problem and invited countries that lost citizens to help investigate. Three days later, Iran admitted responsibility after Western leaders said there was strong evidence the plane was hit by a surface-to-air missile.

The victims included 57 Canadian citizens as well as 11 Ukrainians, 17 people from Sweden, four Afghans and four British citizens. Most of those killed were Iranians. The other five nations have demanded Iran accept full responsibility and pay compensation to the victims' families.

The plane was a Boeing 737-800 that was designed and built in the US. The plane's engine was designed by CFM International, a joint company between French group Safran and US group GE Aviation. Investigators from both countries have been invited to take part in the probe.





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Trump warns Iran's supreme leader to be 'careful with his words' Ukraine says Iran to hand over downed jet's black boxes

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## [Syrian rebels seen on plane to Tripoli are 'mercenaries for GNA': Libyan newspaper](#)

Author:

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1579359053488870700

Sat, 2020-01-18 17:49

LONDON: A video has emerged showing dozens of what appear to be Syrian rebels on an Afriqiyah Airways plane headed to Libya where they will allegedly fight



alongside the country's Government of National Accord (GNA), Libyan newspaper Al-Shahid has claimed.

In the video, the men – three of whom were seen wearing military uniforms – are on their way to Libya where they will reportedly fight as mercenaries for the GNA's militias.

On Wednesday, British newspaper The Guardian published an article suggesting that 2,000 Syrian fighters have traveled to Libya from Turkey or will soon arrive in the war torn country to fight for the GNA. The Guardian cited Syrian sources in all three countries.

The oil-rich north African state has been in turmoil since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising that overthrew and killed dictator Muammar Qaddafi.

Haftar, who backs a rival administration in Libya's east, launched a major military offensive to capture Tripoli in April 2019.

The military commander held talks in Athens on Friday, two days ahead of a peace conference in Berlin which he and the head of the GNA Fayez Al-Sarraj are expected to attend.



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UN Libya mission 'deeply concerned' over disruption in oil production, urges restraint  
Saudi envoy receives Libyan ambassador to the UN

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# US State Department sanctions top IRGC general for crackdown on protesters

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WASHINGTON: The US Department of State imposed sanctions on Friday on a leading Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps general following Iran's crackdown on protesters, US Special Representative on Iran Brian Hook said.

"The United States is listing IRGC Brig. Gen. Hassan Shavapor under Section 7031c, visa sanctions," Hook told reporters.

"General Shavapor committed gross violations of human rights against protesters at the press briefing. He oversaw the massacre of 148 helpless Iranians in the Mashar region last November," he said.

Hook added that the designation was the result of photographic and video tips submitted to the department by Iranians.

The department has received more than 88,000 such tips since it appealed for Iranians to report evidence of repression and gross human rights abuses, Hook said.

Iran has denied US allegations of widespread repression but has acknowledged confronting separatists in Mahshahr that it said were armed.

Hook's press statement came after Iran's top leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made comments about the day Tehran hit US bases in Iraq with missiles in response to the killing of the country's top military commander Qassem Soleimani, calling it "a day of God."

He also said that the killing of Soleimani was a "disgrace" to the American administration and that the attack showed the "terrorist nature" of Washington.

In response, Hook said: "The more Iran threatens the world, the more isolated it will become."

Hook also said that US sanctions were working, citing Iran's president Hassan Rouhani admitting financial losses due to the sanctions and pointing toward Iran's "major banking crisis."

He added: "We have succeeded in making the Iranian regime and whoever helps it pay a heavy price."

Also on Friday, Hook praised the UK and its decision to classify Lebanon's Hezbollah movement as a terrorist group.





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Countdown to UN sanctions on Iran over nuclear deal US stands firm against Iran, it will strike if attacked: Brian Hook