

Lebanon pays outstanding UN dues after stripped of vote

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Mon, 2020-01-13 17:33

BEIRUT: Lebanon's representative to the UN Monday said the crisis-hit country has paid outstanding dues it owes the international body after it lost voting privileges because it was behind on payments.

"Lebanon paid its dues that were delayed (a) few days... and everything is back to normal," Amal Mudallali, the country's ambassador to the UN, said in a post on Twitter.

"Lebanon is not under article 19 anymore," she added, referring to a UN provision that allows the body to strip a member state of voting privileges if they have fallen behind on financial contributions.

The UN on Friday said that Lebanon was among seven countries which would lose the right to vote in the General Assembly because of a failure to pay dues.

This sparked a social media outcry in Lebanon, with many blasting the government for putting the country in such a position.

The small Mediterranean nation is facing its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war.

The World Bank says that Lebanon is in recession, and has warned that the proportion of people living in poverty could increase from a third to half the population.

The economic downturn coincides with an anti-government protest movement that has been active since October 17.

Protesters are demanding the removal of a political class they deem incompetent and corrupt.



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[Trump: US was facing imminent threat of attack from Soleimani](#)

Mon, 2020-01-13 18:50

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Monday morning defended his decision to kill Iranian commander Qassem Soleimani, contending Soleimani posed an impending threat to the United States but also saying that was not important given the military leader's history.

"The Fake News Media and their Democrat Partners are working hard to determine whether or not the future attack by terrorist Soleimani was 'imminent' or not, & was my team in agreement." Trump wrote on Twitter.

"The answer to both is a strong YES., but it doesn't really matter because of his horrible past!"

Since confirming that Iranian military leader Qassem Soleimani had been killed by a US air strike in Baghdad, administration officials have claimed

they acted because of an imminent risk of attacks on American diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region. Democrats and a few Republicans in Congress have questioned the justification of the attacks and said they have not been given adequate, detailed briefings.

Last week Trump posited in an interview that Iran had been poised to attack four American embassies before Soleimani was killed in a U.S. drone strike on Jan. 3. But on Sunday US Defense Secretary said he did not see specific evidence that Iran was planning an attack.

“What the president said was that there probably could be additional attacks against embassies. I shared that view,” Esper said. “The president didn’t cite a specific piece of evidence.”

When pressed on whether intelligence officers offered concrete evidence on that point, Esper said: “I didn’t see one with regards to four embassies.”



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Trump says he believes Soleimani was targeting ‘four embassies’
Pompeo: Qassem Soleimani not in Baghdad on diplomatic mission

Japanese PM Abe Shinzo arrives in UAE

Mon, 2020-01-13 17:31

DUBAI: Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo arrived in Abu Dhabi on Monday on the second half of his Middle East tour that aims to boost bilateral cooperation between Tokyo and the region.

The Japanese premier touched down in Abu Dhabi International Airport earlier in the day, and is expected to meet the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.

He will also attend the gala dinner event at Emirates Palace featured by Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW), where he will also meet President of Indonesia Joko Widodo.

Abe intends to hold talks with leaders of the UAE and try to win their support for Japan's plan to send naval Self-Defense Force units to the Middle East on a mission to gather information for ensuring sea lane safety in the region.

He also plans to call on the cooperation of the three countries he is visiting in order to boost diplomatic efforts for easing the tensions in the region.



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[US troops clear rubble from Iraq base days after Iran strike](#)

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Mon, 2020-01-13 12:16

AIN AL-ASAD BASE, Iraq: US troops were clearing rubble and debris on Monday from a military base housing American soldiers in western Iraq, days after it was struck by Iranian ballistic missiles.

The Ain Al-Asad air base in Iraq's western Anbar province is a sprawling complex about 180 kilometers west of Baghdad and houses about 1,500 members

of the US military and the US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State militant group.

It was struck by a barrage of Iranian missiles on Wednesday, in retaliation for the US drone strike that killed a top Iranian commander, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, whose killing raised fears of a wider war in the Middle East. An Associated Press crew touring the Ain Al-Asad base Monday saw large craters in the ground and damaged military trailers as well as forklifts lifting rubble and loading it onto trucks from a large area the size of a football stadium.

The US said no American soldiers were killed or wounded in the Iranian attack.

Ain Al-Asad air base was first used by American forces after the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein, and later saw American troops stationed there amid the fight against the Daesh group in Iraq and Syria. Trump visited the sprawling Ain Al-Asad air base in December 2018, making his first presidential visit to troops in the region. Vice President Mike Pence also has visited the base.





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[Qassem Soleimani](#)

No Iraqi casualties as 22 Iranian missiles hit bases: Iraq militaryUS announces new sanctions on Iran after missile strikes on bases in Iraq

[Four Iraqi servicemen wounded by rocket attack on air base](#)

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By QASSEM ABDUL-ZAHRA | AP

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1578856138376592300

Sun, 2020-01-12 18:31

BAGHDAD: Four members of Iraq's military were wounded Sunday in a rocket attack targeting an air base just north of Baghdad where American trainers are present, Iraqi security officials said.

The attack by at least six rockets came just days after Iran fired ballistic missiles at two bases in Iraq that house US forces, causing no casualties. Recent heightened tensions between the US and Iran were sparked last month when a rocket attack killed an American contractor at a base in Iraq. The US has blamed that attack and others on Iran-backed militias.

Sunday's attack wounded an Iraqi air force officer and three enlisted men, Iraqi security officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

The rockets struck Balad air base, which hosts American trainers, advisers and a company that provides maintenance services for F-16 aircraft. Some rockets fell on a restaurant inside the air base, the officials said.

The base is located some 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Baghdad. A statement from the Iraqi army's official media office confirmed the attack but said eight rockets hit the base, and that two officers had been wounded. The difference in accounts could not immediately be reconciled.

"There are American experts, trainers and advisers at the base," said one defense official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media.

The US and Iran recently stepped back from escalating tensions following the killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Iran's top general, in a US airstrike in Baghdad. A senior Iraqi leader of an Iran-backed militia was also killed. Iran's retaliatory attack for Soleimani's death hit two Iraqi bases, Ain Al-Asad and Irbil, where American troops are based.

The limited Iranian strikes appeared to be mainly a show of force, and deescalated tensions that had threatened to turn Iraq into a proxy battlefield.



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