
Pentagon Had No Evidence of Iran's Plan To Attack US Embassies

13/01/2020



U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper admitted Sunday that he has seen no concrete "evidence" that Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, killed this month in a U.S. operation in Baghdad, planned to attack four U.S. embassies, as President Donald Trump claims.

Esper said he agreed with Trump that attacks against U.S. embassies were likely, however, stated that Trump's remarks to Fox News about Iran's plan to attack four U.S. embassies were not based on any specific evidence.

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

Since the assassination of Soleimani by a U.S. airstrike in Baghdad, U.S. officials have claimed they acted because of an imminent risk of attacks on U.S. diplomats and service members in Iraq and throughout the region.

Trump said on Friday that Iran probably had targeted the U.S. embassy in Baghdad and was aiming to attack four U.S. embassies before Soleimani was killed, accusations that now are contradicted by Esper's statement.

"We will tell you probably it was going to be the embassy in Baghdad," Trump said to Fox News. "I can reveal that I believe it would have been four embassies."

Esper said in a separate interview to CNN that the administration had "exquisite intelligence" that a broader attack against multiple embassies was likely.

As a response to Soleimani's death, Iran's Revolutionary Guards launched a surface-to-surface ballistic missile attack on the Iraqi Ain al-Assad and Erbil airbases on Jan. 7, which hosts both Iraqi and U.S. forces.

Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs Javad Zarif explained that the strikes were "proportionate and concluded"

measures in self-defense under Article 51 of U.N. Charter," adding that the country "does not seek escalation nor war, but will defend ourselves against any aggression."

Zarif also confirmed that his country notified Iraqi authorities of the attack on U.S. bases, resulting in no casualties on the Iraqi side.
