

Twenty-nine killed in attack on military parade in southwestern Iran

Keith Jones
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At least 29 people were killed and 70 wounded Saturday when gunmen attacked a military parade in Ahvaz, the capital of Iran's southwestern Khuzestan province. The dead included roughly equal numbers of Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) soldiers and civilian spectators, among them a four-year-old girl and a young boy.

According to Iranian authorities, Saturday's terrorist attack was carried out by four people, two of whom were subsequently killed and two captured.

The Ahvaz National Resistance, a little-known ethno-nationalist group fighting for the secession of Iran's largely Arab-speaking oil-rich Khuzestan province, claimed responsibility.

Tehran has accused Washington, which has reimposed devastating economic sanctions against Iran, and its client states in the Gulf of facilitating the attack.

A "foreign regime recruited, trained," and "armed" the perpetrators of the Ahvaz assault, declared Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on social media Saturday. "Iran," he continued, "holds regional terror sponsors and their US masters accountable for such attacks. Iran will respond swiftly and decisively in defence of Iranian lives."

Yesterday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that an unnamed Gulf country had provided for the "financial, weaponry and political needs" of the assailants, who targeted a parade marking the beginning of the eight-year (1980-88), US-fanned Iran-Iraq War. "It is America who supports these little mercenary countries in the region," continued the Iranian president. "It is Americans who are provoking them ... who provide them with their required necessities to perpetrate such crimes."

Referencing Washington's sponsorship of the Shah's brutal dictatorial regime, Rouhani said the US wants

"to create chaos and turmoil ... so that they can return to the country one day and take charge as they did in the old days. But none of these is possible."

Egged on by the Trump administration, the Saudi regime and its Gulf allies have repeatedly threatened Iran, including by creating a Sunni "anti-terrorist" military alliance, and laid waste, with US logistical support, to Yemen in a war that Riyadh claims is necessary to defeat "Iranian-backed" Houthi rebels.

In May 2017, the Saudi Crown Prince and kingdom's effective ruler, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, threatened to do battle "inside Iran." "We won't wait for the battle to be in Saudi Arabia," declared the Crown Prince in a Saudi television interview. "Instead, we will work so that the battle is for them in Iran."

On Sunday, Tehran summoned the resident charge d'affaires for the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia's closest regional ally, to protest remarks by Abdulkhaleq Abdulla—an adviser to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and deputy supreme commander of the UAE's armed force, Mohammed bin Zayed—in which he had openly applauded the Ahvaz attack.

Writing on his Twitter account, Abdulla said, "attacking a military target is not a terrorist act;" then added, "Moving the battle deeper inside Iran is a declared option and will increase during the next phase."

Iranian President Rouhani's remarks holding Washington responsible for Saturday's attack were made shortly before he left for New York, where he will attend this week's opening of the annual UN General Assembly.

US President Donald Trump and his top aides have been signaling for weeks that they intend to use the UN deliberations to escalate Washington's campaign of diplomatic, economic, and military pressure against

Iran. The spearhead of this campaign is the US drive to crash the Iranian economy by strong-arming states around the world to abide by unilateral US sanctions, including as of November 4 a complete embargo on Iranian oil exports. But it has also seen US forces in Syria, and their Israeli allies, repeatedly target IRGC forces fighting in Syria against ISIS and against Islamist forces backed by Washington and their Gulf allies.

The US sanctions are patently illegal. They violate the UN-backed, US co-authored, 2015 Iran nuclear accord, which Tehran—as all the other signatories to the agreement and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have repeatedly attested—has fulfilled to the letter. The US sanctions are also, under international law, tantamount to an act of war.

Yet Trump intends to use appearances at the UN on Tuesday and Wednesday and various meetings on the sidelines of the General Assembly to fulminate against Iran for being a “rogue state” and to bully and threaten other countries to fall into line with Washington’s drive for regime change in Tehran or themselves face US reprisals.

Underscoring that the US is preparing for military action against Iran across the Middle East, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said last Friday that Washington will strike against Iran if “US interests” are attacked by Iranian-backed “proxy” forces. Recently the US blamed Iran, without providing any evidence, for an attack on its consulate in Basra, which occurred in the midst of widespread political violence. Speaking on CNN, Pompeo said, “We have told the Islamic Republic of Iran that using a proxy force to attack an American interest will not prevent us from responding against the prime actor. ... Iran will be held accountable for those incidents.”

On Saturday, Trump’s personal lawyer, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, vowed that US imperialism will soon bring about regime change in Tehran in an address to an “Iran Uprising Summit.” The summit was sponsored by the National Council of Resistance of Iran, a group that enjoys next-to-no support within Iran and that prior to becoming a darling of America’s neo-conservative right was for decades on Washington’s list of “terrorist organizations.”

“I don’t know when we’re going to overthrow them,” said Giuliani. “It could be in a few days,

months, a couple of years. But it’s going to happen.”

Speaking at a similar gathering in Paris in July 2017, John Bolton, the former George W. Bush administration official who in April became Trump’s National Security Advisor, was equally forthright. “The declared policy of the United States should be the overthrow of the mullahs’ regime in Tehran,” he proclaimed.

In a transparent lie, the US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Hayley, while making the tour of US Sunday morning talk shows, claimed: “The United States is not looking to do regime change in Iran. We’re not looking to do regime change anywhere.”



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