

Trump threatens Iraq with ‘very big sanctions’ unless it pays **BILLIONS** back for an air base if US troops forced to withdraw



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Iraq should brace itself for sanctions that’ll make the ones placed on Iran look pale in comparison if it kicks out the US troops without first covering the costs the US spent on its airbase there, US President Donald Trump said.

“We have a very extraordinarily expensive airbase 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 on board of the Air Force One on Sunday.

The punitive measures that the US 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 US 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 canceling 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.

‘We are not allowed to touch Iran’s cultural sites? Does not work that way’

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

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

“They’re allowed to kill our people. They’re allowed to torture and maim our people. They’re allowed to use roadside bombs and blow up our people. And we’re not allowed to touch their cultural site? It doesn’t work that way.”

Trump’s statement on Saturday that the US 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.

Tensions between the US and Iran have been mounting ever since a series of US airstrikes against Shia Kataib Hezbollah militia in Syria and Iraq on December 29 killed at least 25 fighters, triggering a siege of the US Embassy in Baghdad that

saw demonstrators chanting "*Death to America*" and setting checkpoints on fire. The US pinned the blame on the showdown at its diplomatic compound on Tehran and its "*proxies.*" On Thursday, the US launched a drone strike at a convoy traveling near Baghdad Airport, killing Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander - Qassem Soleimani - along with a dozen other senior Iraqi militia leaders.

The murder of Soleimani, who played a key role in the fight against IS in Syria and Iraq, has drawn outrage across Iran and Iraq, with Tehran vowing to avenge the assassination, calling it "*an act of international terrorism.*" Washington, meanwhile, insists that Soleimani was the mastermind behind a spate of attacks on American personnel, including at the US Embassy, and says he was plotting new assaults.

Source: <https://www.rt.com/news/477539-iraq-sanctions-base-withdrawl/>

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