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Report: Abe eyes another meeting with Rouhani in September

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is considering holding talks with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani when he visits New York in September to attend a UN General Assembly session, government sources said on Wednesday.

After meeting with Rouhani in Tehran on June 12, Abe told a joint news conference that he would hold another round of talks with the Iranian president at some point in the future, according to The Japan Times.

Since returning to power in 2012, Abe has held discussions with Rouhani on the sidelines of General Assembly sessions every year.

During his visit to Iran through June 14, Abe also met with the country's Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, but failed to broker a dialogue between Tehran and Washington.

Abe still hopes to ease intensifying tensions between Iran and the United States by playing a mediator role.

At a news conference in Tokyo on Wednesday, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kotaro Nogami said Japan is "deeply concerned" about the heightened tensions.

"We will continue diplomatic efforts, while cooperating with the United States and other countries involved," he added.

Three IRGC forces killed in terror attack in NW Iran

Three servicemen of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) lost their lives when they came under attack by terrorists in the country's northwestern province of West Azarbaijan.

The IRGC announced in a statement that a vehicle carrying forces from its Hamzeh Seyyed al-Shohada base was attacked at the entrance of the border city of Piranshahr.

The statement added that three IRGC members, identified as Hasef Ahmadi, Sattar Pirouti and Omid Mollazadeh, were killed and another sustained injuries.

According to the statement, intelligence operations and a manhunt are underway to arrest the fugitive assailants. Earlier, Piranshahr Governor Ali Torabi said the IRGC members were killed in clashes with "terror groups and counter-revolutionary elements."

Iran's Mehr News Agency initially reported that fatalities came after members of the so-called Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan terrorist group opened indiscriminate fire on a vehicle carrying IRGC members near the bus terminal in Piranshahr.

The incident came a week after IRGC servicemen disbanded a team of terrorists in West Azarbaijan.



Rouhani warns Britain about 'consequences' of Iranian tanker seizure

President: Iran's nuclear responses gradual but exponential

Political Desk

President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday Britain would face "consequences" over the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker.

Iran has demanded the immediate release of the Grace 1, which British Royal Marines boarded off Gibraltar last week and seized on suspicion that it was breaking European Union sanctions by taking oil to Syria.

Iran condemned the illegal seizure as "maritime piracy" and summoned the British ambassador on three occasions to convey its protest at the confiscation.

"You (Britain) are the initiator of insecurity and you will realize the consequences later," Rouhani said at a cabinet meeting.

Rouhani called the action "very juvenile, heinous, and wrongful" and "to their [Britain's] detriment," noting that all international efforts should instead be focused on ensuring maritime security.

"Now you are so hopeless that, when one of your tankers wants to move in the region, you have to bring your frigates (to escort it) because you are scared. Then why do you commit such acts (seizure)? You should instead allow navigation to be safe," Rouhani said.

Rouhani further said the British forces took the move "on someone else's behalf," referring to various accounts, including a statement by Spain's Foreign Ministry, which have revealed that the UK carried out the confiscation at the United States' behest.

He noted that the UK seized the vessel inside a territory, which itself has seized from Spain, adding that the people of Spain had deplored the move, too.

Iran nuclear reactions

Rouhani said Iran's decision to increase uranium enrichment would produce fuel for power plants and serve other



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peaceful aims, and that it was within the framework of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

He was speaking a day after European powers accused Iran of "pursuing activities inconsistent with its commitments" under the nuclear deal and called for an urgent meeting of the parties to the agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

"You (Europeans) do not need to worry about Iran, your concern must be over the United States, which has violated this whole commitment and undermined international obligations," Rouhani said.

Britain, Germany, France, Russia, China and Iran are the remaining parties to the deal as the United States abandoned last year.

Iran initiated the countermeasures in May in reaction to the US withdrawal from the 2015 agreement. The responses

were also meant to prompt the European parties to the deal to fulfill their side by offsetting the US bans.

The countermeasures have seen Tehran surpassing the 3.67-percent cap set by the deal on the level of its uranium enrichment, and the 130-ton ceiling placed on its heavy water reservoir.

Iran accepted the limits voluntarily as part of the deal, despite not being obligated by the UN nuclear watchdog to commit to any such restrictions.

"They do not provide any reason why Iran should not engage in enrichment. They just say it is bad or Iranians' intention is bad," Rouhani said.

He also raised questions about the claim that enrichment — which carries a multitude of peaceful medicinal and technological benefits — is "bad for Iran and good for others."

The president also said Iran's respons-

es to others' refusal to honor their nuclear commitments "will be gradual, but exponential."

He, however, said the primary objective sought by the countermeasures is to invite others to preserve the agreement and respect international conventions, referring to the fact that the deal has been approved in the form of a UN Security Council resolution and has to be abided by accordingly.

Rouhani further referred to Israel's "concerns" about the agreement.

He cited Tel Aviv's own admission that it had pressured Washington into leaving the JCPOA.

"If an agreement should worry the regional Muslims' worst enemy, namely the Zionists, it must be a powerful agreement."

Reuters and Press TV contributed to this report.

US intelligence service closely cooperating with MKO terrorists: Iran's UN envoy

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations described the Islamic Republic as a victim of terrorism and extra-national organized crime, stating that the anti-Iran terrorist group Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO), supported by some regional and European countries, is working closely with the US intelligence service in a bid to descend Iran into chaos.

"Even though terrorists and organized criminals differ in their motives and methods, they are similar to one another concerning the repercussions of their acts, which are total disruption and comprehensive destruction," Majid Takht-Ravanchi said at a UN Security Council meeting entitled "Threats to international peace and security: Linkage between international terrorism and organized crime" in New York on Tuesday evening.

He added that Iran has been a victim of terrorists and international organized criminals, and has been a pioneer in the fight against them, Press TV reported.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi highlighted that 17,161 Iranian citizens, including late president Mohammad Ali Rajaei, former prime minister Mohammad Javad Bahaonar, late head of Supreme Judicial Council Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti,

late deputy chief of the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Ali Sayyad Shirazi, 27 legislators as well as four nuclear scientists have been killed by terrorists.



PICASA

"The MKO terrorist group, which bears responsibility for the death of more than 12,000 Iranian civilians, is currently being sponsored by a number of regional counties and several states in Europe. America has provided its members ref-

uge after removing the group from its list of designated terrorist organizations. The US intelligence service is working closely with them in order to hatch conspiracies of destruc-

Hussein.

The notorious outfit has carried out numerous attacks against Iranian civilians and government officials for several decades.

A few years ago, MKO members were relocated from their Camp Ashraf in Iraq's Diyala Province to Camp Hurriyet (Camp Liberty), a former US military base in Baghdad, and were later sent to Albania.

Those members, who have managed to escape, have revealed MKO's scandalous means of access to money, almost exclusively coming from Saudi Arabia.

Takht-Ravanchi then pointed to Iran's cooperation with Iraq and Syria in its fight against Daesh terrorists, emphasizing that Iran's military presence in both countries is based on requests by their legal governments.

The Iranian UN ambassador also made a reference to his country's leading role in fighting drug trafficking, saying that more than 39 percent of world narcotics in 2017 were discovered by Iran.

"Over the past 40 years, Iran has lost 3,815 members of the law enforcement forces during anti-drug operations. More than 12,000 people have been injured as well," he said.

Takht-Ravanchi finally called on the international community to support Iran in the fight against illegal drugs without any preconditions, discrimination and political considerations.