

**Geollect Comment:**

In retaliation, after the assassination of Qasem Soleimani on 3 Jan 2020, Iran launched ballistic missile strikes into Iraq targeting infrastructure known to contain deployed US troops.

Iraq's military have reported that a total of 22 missiles were launched between 2245 and 2315 GMT into Iraq. Five missiles targeted Irbil military base and 17 of these missiles were launched towards Al Asad Air base, two of which did not explode. Iraqi media sources have stated that two missiles targeting Irbil, landed in the village of Sidan, in Irbil province and a third landed in the Bardah Rashes District.

Initial damage reports indicate that the missiles struck areas of the Al-Asad air base that were not populated by Americans and alarms were raised in time to allow people in harm's way to find safety. These reports indicate that there were no US casualties and no Iraqi forces were injured during the attacks.

Iranian foreign minister has stated that the attack was not an attempt to escalate the situation and that the response of these missile attacks was defensive, legitimate and within international laws.

Additional reporting from Iranian state television claims that the attack was aimed at US helicopters and military equipment which they severely damaged hindering capabilities.



**Legend**

● Reported Missile Targets

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***Geollect Assessment:***

***The launching of ballistic missiles in to Iraq towards US targets is almost certainly a direct retaliation from Iran towards the US as a result of the recent drone strike on Qasem Soleimani. Renewed emphasis is being made by political parties throughout Europe for both parties to de-escalate the situation. If initial reports of no US casualties are true, the situation could be de-escalated by the US not taking direct retaliatory kinetic action, however this remains a realistic possibility. Further escalation, however, remains a credible threat and tensions will almost certainly remain high in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. This is likely to include impacts to merchant vessels operating in and around the Straits of Hormuz and Persian Gulf, areas routinely patrolled by Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGCN) vessels. Vessels are urged to remain vigilant and up to date with the local situation through news and media outlets. Masters, Ship Security Officers and Company Security Officers are advised to carry out detailed risk assessments for each voyage, including considerations of often disputed Iranian claimed territorial waters.***

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