

## TRUMP WARNS IRAN OF ITS 'OFFICIAL END'

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Hostilities persist: A rally held in Tehran in February marking the 40th anniversary of the country's Islamic revolution. APEbrahim Noroozi

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday warned he would destroy Iran if it threatens the U.S. "If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran. Never threaten the United States again," Mr Trump tweeted.

Tensions between the long-time foes resumed a little over a year ago when the U.S. withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an international deal aimed at containing Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for stopping crippling sanctions against the country.

Sunday's Presidential tweet was presumably partly motivated by the Iraqi government reporting that a rocket had been fired into Baghdad's Green Zone — an area that includes government buildings as well as the U.S. Embassy.

The U.S. had already ordered non-essential staff out of Iraq and the White House had announced in early May that it was sending an aircraft carrier and bombers to West Asia. An Iraqi military spokesperson was quoted by the Associated Press as saying the rocket was fired from east Baghdad, an area controlled by Shia militias, which are backed by Iran.

### Softer approach

However, Mr. Trump appeared to adopt a softer approach during a Fox News interview which was aired Sunday evening (it is unclear when the interview was filmed).

"I just don't want them to have nuclear weapons, and they can't be threatening us. And with all of everything that's going on, and I'm not one that believes — you know, I'm not somebody that wants to go into war, because war hurts economies, war kills people most importantly — by far most importantly," he said.

Mr. Trump has sent mixed signals on his positions on the tensions with Iran in the past, often appearing at odds with his hawkish National Security Adviser John Bolton, who has led a hard-line approach against Iran and has, previously, called for an attack on Iran.

Last week, Mr. Trump denied a *New York Times* report that his administration was planning to send 1,20,000 troops to West Asia if conditions deteriorated but at the same time he said he would send "a hell of a lot" more than 1,20,000 troops if need be.

"And don't kid yourself, you do have a military-industrial complex. They do like war," Mr. Trump said during the Fox interview.

Saudi Arabia called on Sunday for emergency regional talks to discuss the Gulf tensions. King Salman invited Gulf leaders and Arab League member states to two emergency summits in Mecca on May 30 to discuss recent "aggressions and their consequences".

( With AFP inputs )

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