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*French President Emmanuel Macron discussed the Iran situation with Russian President Vladimir Putin | Ludovic Marin
AFP via Getty Images*

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Europeans call for calm after US strike kills Iran general

Council president urges an end to the ‘cycle of violence, provocations and retaliations.’

*Європейці закликають до спокою після того, як удар США вбив
Іранського генерала
Президент Франції закликає припинити "цикл насильства, провокацій та
помсти"*

Європейські лідери закликали зменшити напруженість між Сполученими Штатами та Іраном після удару США в Іраку, що вбив Касема Сулеймані, впливого іранського військового командувача. Президент Франції Емманюель Макрон обговорив ситуацію з президентом Росії Володимиром Путіним по телефону, повідомляє його відомство. Франція, яка з червня намагається ліквідувати напруженість між США та Іраном, закликала остудити голови. "Ми бачимо, що ескалація зростає, тоді як ми б хотіли, перш за все, стабільності та деескалації", - заявила вранці по радіо міністр європейських справ Франції Амелі де Мончалін. "Наш пріоритет сьогодні - стабільність регіону". За її словами, Макрон та міністр закордонних справ Жан-Ів Ле Дріан протягом найближчих годин "матимуть контакти з усіма партнерами та суб'єктами в регіоні, оскільки найважливіше це мир".

<https://www.politico.eu/article/europeans-call-for-calm-after-us-strike-kills-iran-general-jean-yves-le-drian-emmanuel-macron/>

PARIS — European leaders have called for a deescalation of tensions between the United States and Iran after a U.S. strike in Iraq killed [Qassem Soleimani](#), the most important Iranian military commander. French President Emmanuel Macron discussed the situation with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the phone Friday morning, according to his office.

France, which has been trying to broker an easing of tensions between the U.S. and Iran since June, called for cool heads.

"We see that escalation is in place while we would like first of all stability and deescalation," Amélie de Montchalin, France's European affairs minister, said on morning radio. "Our priority this morning is the stability of the region."

She said Macron and Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian would, over the coming hours, "have contacts with all the partners and actors in the region because there are a lot of consequences, consequences on peace in the region."

Le Drian later discussed the killing of the general with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

"France calls on everyone to exercise restraint, and on Iran to avoid any measure that could possibly aggravate regional instability, or lead to a serious nuclear proliferation crisis," Le Drian said in a statement, sending a clear warning to Iran ahead of its upcoming planned announcement of new violations of the Iran nuclear deal.

The statement also explicitly reiterated the legitimate grounds upon which the presence of U.S. and European forces are present in Iraq, in an attempt to hedge against possible Iraqi demands that these forces withdraw.

"The priority must be pursuing the action of the international coalition against ISIS, which is intervening in Iraq at the request of Iraqi authorities and in support of Iraqi security forces" Le Drian said.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also spoke with Pompeo and criticized the U.S. operation against Soleimani.

"The U.S. military operation followed a series of dangerous provocations by Iran. However, this action has not made it easier to reduce tensions. I made this point clearly to @SecPompeo as well," Maas tweeted.

The latest tensions started when U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, and reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran.

"The cycle of violence, provocations and retaliations which we have witnessed in Iraq over the past few weeks has to stop. Further escalation must be avoided at all cost," said European Council President Charles Michel in a [statement](#). "The risk is a generalised flare up of violence in the whole region and the rise of obscure forces of terrorism that thrive at times of religious and nationalist tensions."

Soleimani led the elite Quds Force, a U.S.-designated terror organization within the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. He was a kind of regional viceroy for Iran, masterminding and overseeing its vast network of influence and proxy forces across the Levant. Over two decades he oversaw the creation and growth of various militia forces in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria — which were accused of war crimes — that Iran has used to project its power and engage in proxy wars with the U.S. and Israel.

"The American action was a reaction to a series of military provocations for which Iran carries responsibility," said German government spokesperson Ulrike Demmer. "We also see with great concern Iran's activities in the region. We are facing a dangerous escalation ... It is precisely at this point that we need to deescalate."

[#Irak](#): De onrust en gewelddadigheden zijn verder toegenomen in Bagdad en rond het vliegveld. De situatie is onvoorspelbaar. Blijf alert en volg het nieuws. Volg de instructies van de lokale autoriteiten op. Bent u in Bagdad? Verlaat Bagdad als dit op een veilige manier kan.

— 24/7 BZ (@247BZ) [January 3, 2020](#)

The Dutch foreign ministry advised its citizens to "leave Baghdad if this is possible in a safe way," saying "the situation is unpredictable" in a [tweet](#) Friday morning.

The U.K. also called for deescalation, while underlining the threat the Iranian general posed.

"We have always recognised the aggressive threat posed by the Iranian Quds force led by Qasem Soleimani. Following his death, we urge all parties to de-escalate. Further conflict is in none of our interests," U.K. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said in a statement.

The latest tensions started when U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, and reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran. In 2019, Iran started gradually violating the agreement's limits on its nuclear activities and carrying out military action in the Gulf, including shooting down a U.S. drone in June.

On December 27, an Iranian-backed Iraqi militia [launched rockets](#) against a military base in Iraq where U.S. troops were stationed as part of the anti-ISIS coalition, killing one U.S. contractor and wounding four American soldiers. The U.S. retaliated by [bombing one of the militia's outposts](#) on December 29, killing two dozen of its members. The following day, hordes of militiamen from various Iran-backed groups attacked the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, and wrote "Soleimani is my leader" on the wall of the building.